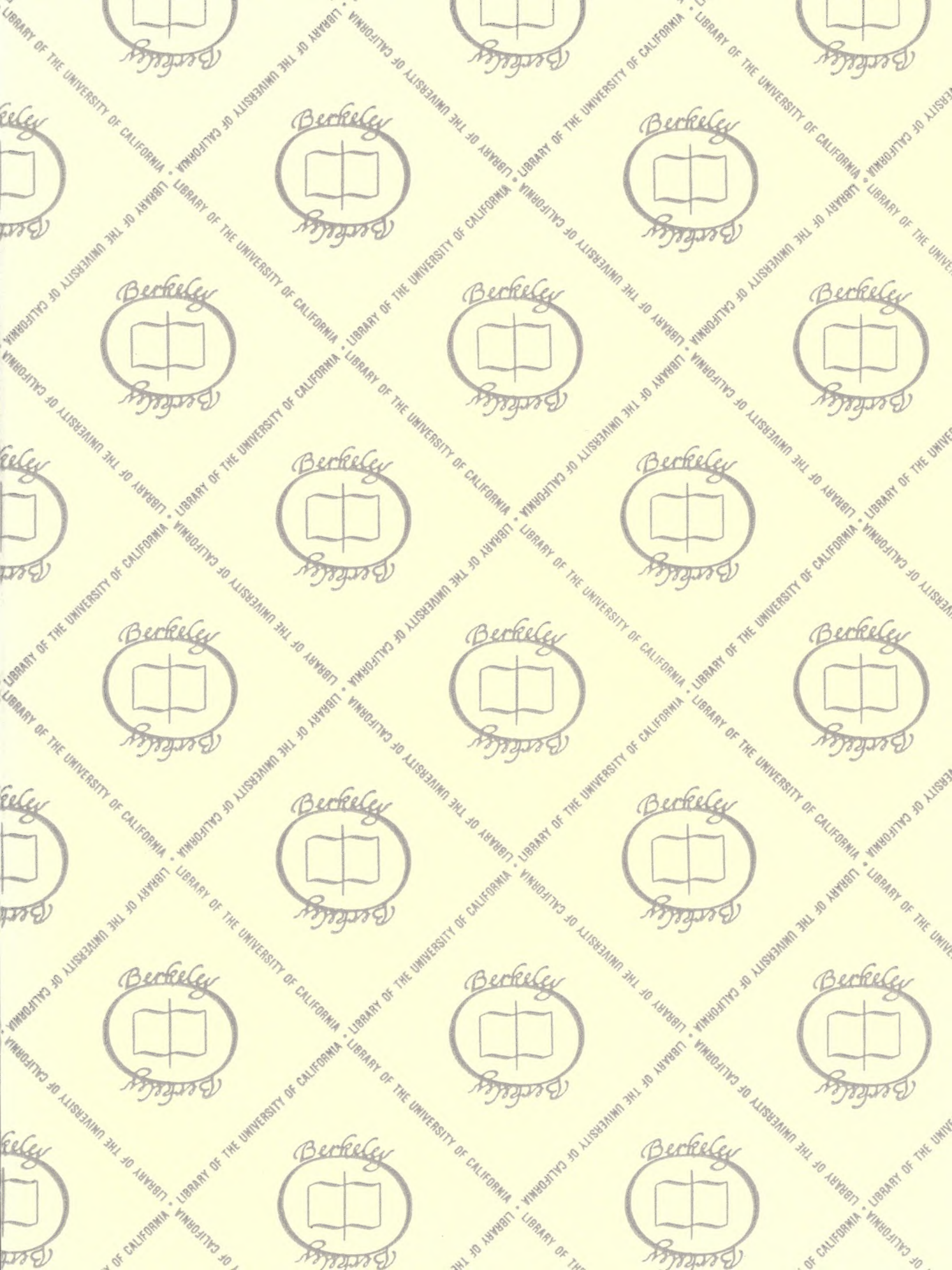


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University History Series

Garff B. Wilson

THE INVISIBLE MAN,

or

Public Ceremonies Chairman at Berkeley for Thirty-five Years

With an Introduction by

Albert H. Bowker

An Interview Conducted by

Suzanne B. Riess

in 1980

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May 8, 1998

Garff Wilson

Garff Wilson, who officially welcomed kings, presidents, literary greats and countless world-famous figures to the University of California at Berkeley, died Wednesday at the age of 89.

Mr. Wilson, the self-described "unidentified man on the right," is also the voice visitors hear during the elevator ride to the top of the campus landmark the Campanile.

Known for his dramatic flair, Mr. Wilson was a professor of rhetoric and dramatic art and head of public ceremonies at Cal for 33 years. He retired in 1976.

Mr. Wilson orchestrated the visits of such notables as Robert Frost, Alex Haley, John F. Kennedy, Dylan Thomas, the queen of the Netherlands and the kings of Denmark, Greece and Morocco.

He liked to say, "I was like a stagehand — opening doors, moving people around, handing out medals. I was always there, the invisible man hovering nervously in the background."

A native of Ogden, Utah, Mr. Wilson was born Jan. 9, 1909. He graduated from UC Berkeley in 1931, taught at Humboldt State College, earned a doctorate at Cornell, then returned to the UC Berkeley campus in 1941 to teach before joining the Army.

Mr. Wilson's house and all his mementos and honors were destroyed in the Oakland hills fire of 1991.

Mr. Wilson is survived by his sister, Janice Hamilton, of Los Angeles. Services will be private.



Garff Wilson at Annual Alumni Association
Charter Day Banquet, April 5, 1979

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INTRODUCTION

In the late spring of 1971, after I had been appointed chancellor but before I had moved to Berkeley, I received a letter from Garff Wilson pointing out that one of my first major duties was to pick a date for the new student reception--a reception at which the Bowkers and a number of hosts were to be in formal dress.

I rather thought it was a joke--a formal reception for shaggy, scruffy boys and longhaired girls in jeans? My advisors at Berkeley told me to do what Garff said, so I did. At the reception, I still had some doubts when several students--dressed as I had expected--used the occasion to discuss perceived ideological differences and express dismay at the state of the nation.

Successive years removed lingering doubts about the tradition, and our last year brought thousands of students in stunning outfits, requiring three hours of handshaking. Perhaps I should have taken as a better omen another Wilson-arranged event--a serenade by the Straw Hat Band on the Bowkers' first night in the University House.

During the past month, I have marched in three academic processions at inaugurations. None had the style and spirit of our Charter Day. I have never been to a bad public ceremony at Berkeley. A great tribute to Garff's imagination and unbelievable attention to details.

So much was added to our life by his ideas and special events. I will never forget the magnificent Luciano Pavarotti concert in the Hearst Greek Theatre celebrating its 75th anniversary. Particularly notable was the "presence" of many distinguished former Theatre visitors--Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, actress Sarah Bernhardt, and singer Luisa Tetrazzini, the parade from the past reaching its peak as Phoebe Apperson Hearst in billowing skirts and parasol swept through the packed Theatre.

Remember Margaret Murdock being made Queen of Tintinnabulation at Charter Day? Whenever a famous visitor came to the campus and walked near the Campanile, it would suddenly burst forth with the appropriate national anthem. Everything, from "East is Red" and "God Save the Queen" to the Swedish and Yugoslavian anthems, at different times drifted over an unsuspecting campus, the result of Garff's planning.

Most of all, in Garff I found a close and helpful friend. The chancellor at Berkeley gets many more invitations to speak, eat, listen, and drink, than any calendar would allow. So every week a group of personal staff met with

me to go over the invitations and assign responsibility. From many such meetings through the years, as well as performing in ceremonies under his direction, I found Garff a true friend--always concerned about my health, education, and welfare.

The whole Berkeley community owes Garff a great debt of gratitude for years of service. I do, too, but I also acquired a close friend.

Albert H. Bowker
Chancellor, University of
California at Berkeley,
1971-1980

17 November 1980
Washington, D.C.

INTERVIEW HISTORY

University of California history has been an interest of the Regional Oral History Office since its inception in 1954. The office's mandate is to interview leading figures or well-placed witnesses to major events or trends in the history of California. The university has always been a subject of importance in that history. Interviews with faculty, administrators, and insightful members of the university community have chronicled departmental and college histories as well as the workings of the university in relation to the state.

Garff Bell Wilson, 1931 graduate of the university, emeritus professor of speech and rhetoric, advisor to presidents and chancellors, and since 1948 chairman of the Public Ceremonies Committee, a man who has been "ideally situated to observe the University as well as guide it in countless ways to its coming of age" [Chancellor Albert Bowker to Garff Wilson, February 8, 1980], was a natural candidate for an oral history.

When we proposed that he be interviewed we knew it was timely to have Professor Wilson's recollections of a half century of active involvement with the maturation of the university at Berkeley. On July 1, 1980 a transition would take place: Chancellor Albert Bowker would leave, and Chancellor Ira Michael Heyman would take office. Fifty years earlier, Robert Gordon Sproul had been inaugurated as president of a university incomparably smaller, younger, and simpler--of such things are history and public ceremony made. We submitted our proposal to the Chancellor's Office, it was accepted, and the interviews began in spring, 1980.

The nineteen interviews were held at 1:15 p.m. on Tuesdays in Professor Wilson's office on the third floor of Sproul Hall. The room was decorated with posters and pictures that represented highlights of public ceremonies. The open window overlooked the field south of Barrows Hall, a very undergraduate-sounding corner of the campus, echoing with the yells and cheers of baseball games. Telephone calls were held in abeyance by Terry Tough, Garff Wilson's excellent administrative assistant. When 3:00 rolled around, Professor Wilson was en route to other duties. Considering how busy the Office of Public Ceremonies is, and how ~~our~~ self-entitled INVISIBLE MAN is that office, it was amazing that he could close the door on all that and be an ideally meditative and related interviewee. Yet he had the discipline and presence of mind to do so.

Much of the subject of our interviews was people and traditions. The Office of Public Ceremonies creates, perpetuates, files, and indexes traditional events at the university. From welcoming freshmen and heads of state and church, and smoothly choreographing complex charter and commencement ceremonies, to planning dinners, dedications, celebrations of all sizes, Garff Wilson and his office organize and conserve custom at the university.

Once, after an interview ended, he reflected humorously on his job, defining it as a glorified touching of the garments of the famous. I thought immediately then that doing the oral history was a secondhand handling of those garments. But really, it was a firsthand contact with a man whose life was a wonderful whole piece of cloth itself.

Most oral history interviewees are drawn out somewhat on their childhood and educational experiences. I was particularly interested in how Garff Wilson's Mormon background was training for his later life and career. He talks about youthful influences and educational experiences at length, and it appears clear that oratory and organizational abilities were logical outgrowths of that upbringing. Although, as Jim Kantor, University Archivist, who read the manuscript in proof, said, "To think, if that appointment to West Point had been open!" Depending on one's point of view, the Pentagon might be a more amusing place; the university certainly less. But there persists a sense of appropriateness in Garff Wilson's life choices.

The interviews took place in a period during which Professor Wilson was otherwise occupied with the usual working assortment of a Charter Day, a festival, and royal visitors. The interviewing ended July 31 and by then he was editing his American theater textbook for a revised edition. In fall of 1980 he was free to review the oral history memoir, which had been edited in the Regional Oral History Office for clarity and continuity but generally left as it was, the chronological arrangement of the interviews being the arrangement in which the final manuscript is presented. His changes were minimal, withholding only one story, which I think he judged to be egocentric. And there are many stories in this oral interview with a master storyteller, the familiar voice of the Andy Smith eulogy and the Dickens Christmas Carol reading.

Garff Wilson suggested, when we discussed what to include in the oral history, that he take this opportunity to document the history of the California Club, which was created in 1934 to promote a harmonious all-campus spirit when that was deemed essential to the growing university. The files of the club, now in the Office of Public Ceremonies, will be permanently housed in the University Archives. Income from the California Club's Deming MacLise Fund helped to underwrite the oral history.

Well, then, as our story goes, after Garff's Utah days, and his happy undergraduate years at Berkeley, with the splendid reward of a tour to Europe on the All-California Debate Team, and then graduate years at Berkeley, and at Cornell with the inspired Alexander Magnus Drummond,

and teaching and multitudinous theater experiences, and after a peripatetic Army career, our hero came back to Berkeley, and there the curtain rose again, and the unmistakable voice of Garff Wilson was heard, and his inimitable touch is still felt.

So now, in his own words, Garff Wilson!

Suzanne Riess
Interviewer-Editor

15 April 1981
Regional Oral History Office
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University of California at Berkeley

BIOGRAPHICAL MATTER

Administrative Positions, University of California, Berkeley

Special Assistant to President Sproul, 1946-1952
Special Assistant to President Sproul and Chancellor Kerr,
1952-1958
Special Assistant to President Kerr, 1958-1966
Special Assistant to Chancellor Heyns, 1966-1971
Special Assistant to Chancellor Bowker, 1971-1980
Special Assistant to Chancellor Heyman, 1980-
State Coordinator of California Clubs, 1947-1967

Academic Positions, University of California, Berkeley

Instructor in Public Speaking, 1941-1942, 1946-1951
Assistant Professor, Speech, 1951-1953
Associate Professor, 1953-1958
Professor of Speech (later, Rhetoric) and Dramatic Art, 1958-

Awards and Honors

Western Speech Association Book Award, 1966
Speech Association of America Book Award, 1966
Centennial Citation, University of California, Berkeley, 1968
Service Award, University of California, Berkeley, 1968
Centennial Medal, University of California, Berkeley, 1973

Memberships and Associations

Berkeley Fellows
Speech Association of America
Educational Theater Association
Western Speech Association
Association for Theater Research

I CHILDHOOD AND FAMILY

[Interview 1: February 28, 1980]##

Mormon Forebears

- Wilson: In my mother's memoir written by her about her father she says that he was in the Christianson Handcart Company and he was only ten years old then. Janice, my younger sister, who is still much more connected with the church than I am, believes that that's an error. She thinks it was our grandfather's older brother, whom we called Uncle Peter, who was lent to this elderly lady in the handcart company who couldn't pull her own cart! So they lent this fourteen-year-old, strong young man.
- Riess: In Handcarts to Zion, by LeRoy and Ann Hafen, the Garff party was Niels Garff, age forty-six, and his wife Marie Jacobsen, age thirty-six, and child Peter N., age ten.
- Wilson: Yes, that would be it. I have the birth date of my grandfather Christian Garff. He is listed as a pioneer of 1857 and was born in February of 1847, according to my mother's records, born in a small town in Denmark, married in 1874, and died in 1927. He is one of three of my grandparents who were born in the old country, as they always said, and who were listed as Mormon pioneers--LDS pioneers. That meant that they immigrated to Utah before the railway came through. The railway was finished in 1869. So anybody who came by oxcart or by handcart or by foot or so on was called a pioneer.

##This symbol indicates that a tape or a segment of a tape has begun or ended. For a guide to the tapes see page 393.

Riess: Maybe it's not part of the history that you're aware of, but according to the record in the book the great-great-grandmother, Marie Jacobsen, died on the plains.

Wilson: I think that's true. One of them did. I had a great-grandfather who died on the plains leaving a widow and a baby. His best friend was named Goodmanson. Goodmanson was a bachelor and Goodmanson promised that he would marry the widow and take care of her, and he did. So one of my great-grandmothers is named Goodmanson. She had her own children from Niels Garff and another family from Goodmanson.

My own mother remembers a person that she called Grandma Goodmanson very well. She evidently was a striking person in both appearance and personality. All these people had to have tremendous strength, of course. Those were the grandparents on my mother's side.

On my father's side, Robert Bell Wilson was a pioneer of 1868. He had just got through. He was born in Gatehead, Scotland in 1845. He died in 1916. I remember him. He immigrated to Utah in 1868.

Riess: Why do you say he just got through?

Wilson: Because next year the railway was finished and they were not called pioneers then.

Riess: Was there a glory that you recall in having been part of the handcart group?

Wilson: There was great admiration and a feeling that how could these people have had the courage to start out that way pulling their possessions in a handcart over those hundreds and thousands of miles of deserts and mountains and fording rivers and so on, and just facing every deprivation, every hardship. That's why I say that I'm very proud of my pioneer ancestors, because they were that kind of person not only to face that journey, but to be converted to a strange new religion that was looked upon with great disfavor and fear and contempt. In their home countries--Scotland, Denmark, Sweden--they had to break away from the established churches of their communities, of their nations. They had to face sometimes real persecution and the alarm of their neighbors that they should embrace this strange western religion. But they had the courage to do it and then to pick up, to leave everything they had known before, and come to both a strange country and then a strange wilderness in Utah.

Riess: A community of people would not have come together?

Wilson: Yes, they would get a few of their friends. If in a certain town there had been a handful of converts, then they would band together and come and hold out together. I heard stories of the actual persecution by the established church authorities of these new converts to the LDS Church and even when I was a child I remember the memory of being unwanted, of being a persecuted group. That was very vivid in the mind of my mother and relatives who would come to visit. That was, of course, the reason they packed up their belongings and went to Utah, to get away from it.

They started that trek to Utah in 1847 before gold was discovered in California. The original movement from Missouri to Utah, Brigham Young and the first band, was in 1847. That was a real heroic effort. After gold was discovered in California the following year and there were regular wagon trains established, it was less uncommon; it was less adventurous to go after the California route had been established than to go before there was anything established, and it was Brigham Young and the first party that did that.

The thing that all of us who were reared in that generation really wonder at was the scene at what they now call Immigration Canyon--Brigham Young lying ill in the rear of the wagon, as I remember it, looking out over the valley of the Great Salt Lake, desolate, sagebrush, and rattlesnakes and nothing there, and saying, "This is the place." We always thought that the rest of the group with him should have said, "No, no, no, let's go on!" [laughter]

I don't know what the sociologists say. He was a very great leader and he probably realized that in order to keep the band together, they had to face a harsh existence. If they worked and sacrificed, they would feel that they were doing something noble. And this is how it turned out to be. They certainly did work and sacrifice.

Riess: You are saying that your family felt itself a minority in Denmark and in Scotland, and then in Utah did they also--

Wilson: Well, they didn't feel a minority there, but they were very clearly aware of the persecution that had driven them to Utah and the misunderstanding which still persisted throughout the country. In fact, when my own family moved to Los Angeles in December, 1927, my mother was afraid that when the neighbors discovered that she belonged to the Mormon Church they would not let their children play with my two younger sisters. She actually still carried that fear. It didn't happen. The neighbors were very hospitable and particularly one named Mrs. Johnson who became a lifelong friend of Mother's. It never occurred to her, she says, but Mother still remembered that persecution.

- Wilson: Johnson's Army--my own background is vague in that--but the United States government sent an army to Utah. I don't know why. To enforce something. But they [the Mormons] all dispersed. They went to the hills. They were afraid they were going to be burned out, routed by Johnson's Army. My relatives remembered that and various other things. They vividly remembered the Indians who seemed to be friendlier (the American Indians) than the white settlers! [laughter]
- Riess: When the Mormon missionaries went to Denmark it wasn't to convert the Danes so much as it was to bring them to settle this country?
- Wilson: It was to convert the Danes too. It happened to be a missionary who converted my great-grandfather.
- Riess: But the point of conversion was to encourage immigration, wasn't it?
- Wilson: Yes, well, sure, sure. To save their souls--
- Riess: It wasn't that they wanted to establish churches in that country.
- Wilson: No, that's right, although they have branches now all over Europe. It was to save their souls by giving them the true gospel and then to bring them to what they called Zion! [laughter] It's interesting that they would choose the name which has opprobrium now among people because of Israel.
- Riess: Yes, there is a lot of confusion there.
- Wilson: There sure is because the Mormons called themselves the children of Israel. You belonged to one of the ten tribes of Israel and the patriarch could tell you which tribe you were descended from. [laughter]
- Riess: You laugh a little bit as if it's changed for you.
- Wilson: Well, it's changed for almost everybody because I think not only has the United States matured in its attitude toward religious differences, but the Mormon communities all over the country have established themselves as good, law-abiding, hard-working citizens. They no longer practice polygamy. They have the virtue or the reputation of being industrious, hard-working, and taking care of their own. Few Mormons they say go on welfare rolls. The church prefers to take care of their own people. I haven't been as close to the church or been going to the church for quite a few years. But my youngest sister, Janice, is still a faithful member of the

Wilson: church and she has no memory of this, no trace of this, because she was too young to hear about it and get it from the older relatives, the pioneer relatives which I remembered, because they were all gone by the time she was born.

Riess: The Wilsons were the Scots?

Wilson: Yes, my grandfather, Robert Bell Wilson, was born in Scotland. His wife, Henrietta Emmett, is the one grandparent who was born in the U.S.A. She was born in 1851 in St. Louis, Missouri.

The story on the Emmett side of the family is that she is a collateral descendant of the Irish hero, Robert Emmet, who was the instigator of an abortive rebellion against England back in about 1805. He was caught, he was hanged, then drawn and quartered by the bloody British. The family story (which I think is apocryphal) is that his brother Thomas moved to the U.S.A. and was the father of Henrietta Emmett, my grandmother. But the Emmetts in my family spell it with two "t's" whereas the Robert Emmet who was a hero in Ireland spelled it with one "t". I don't know, but that was the family story on the Emmett side. I don't know how to check it out. I never have.

Incidentally, the last time I was in Ireland was in 1976 with two friends of mine. We took a bus tour in Dublin. We arrived so late that the original bus was full, and some little man said [imitates Irish brogue], "Is it the tour you're wanting?" We said, "Yes." "Well, I'll lay on another bus," says he. So he waved and here came a great big bus. There were only five of us. The man's name was Joe. He turned out to be the manager of the whole bus operation. So he was our guide.

The first thing he said [was], "Is there anybody with Irish kin on the bus?" I put up my hand. He said, "Tell me, what was your grandmother's name?" I said, "Emmett." He said, "With one 't' or two 't's'?" I said, "I think it was two 't's' but I've seen it spelled both ways." He said, "Glory be to God, we've got Emmet kin on the bus!"

He said, "Now, where was she born?" I said, "She was born in St. Louis." "Well, she'd be a descendant from Thomas Emmet." This bus guide was very knowledgeable about history. "Sure it was Thomas who came to St. Louis and he had a family there. I must show you where your kin was hanged and drawn and quartered by the bloody British." So we went out of our way and got to this little monument in the middle of Dublin somewhere. Three old men were sitting on it. He shushed them away and there is a picture of all of us taken by this monument. All you see is the monument and three pairs of legs!

Wilson: But sometime I thought, if I had the time, I would try to check that connection and see whether it really exists or whether the Emmetts had made it up, just wanted to claim kin with this great Irish patriot. Anyway, she was an Emmett.

Riess: Did she become a Mormon?

Wilson: Oh, yes.

Riess: Marriage would mean conversion or was she a Mormon when your grandfather met her?

Wilson: I don't know. Robert was born in 1845 and she was born in 1851, so he was six years older than she was. I'll have to try and untangle that if it's important.

Riess: Who kept the journal that you have access to?

Wilson: It came about in this way. It's not really a journal, but in the LDS Church there is an organization called the Daughters of the Pioneers. One of their projects for years was to have each daughter of a pioneer collect the history of every member of the family they could and write up a sketch. Then they would have what they called camp meetings [chuckles], and they would read these historical sketches of their parents and grandparents and aunts and uncles to each other and exchange ideas.

Genealogy is a very important function in the LDS Church and they encourage everybody to trace as accurately as possible their ancestry back as far as they can go and they hire professional researchers and genealogists and try to help everybody else. I know my mother has been to Salt Lake City several times after she had lived in Los Angeles to consult the experts and try to find the documents. I think the church has sent various commissions around in Europe to photostat ancient church records and civic records and so on, their belief being that their ancestors want to belong to the true church too. If they can get an accurate name and place of birth and so on, then they can be baptized for the dead and that will give the poor dead soul in the other world a chance then to become one of the chosen ones of the elect. That's why genealogy is so important for them. They believe that.

Riess: So it's a kind of mission.

Wilson: Oh, yes, it's a very sacred mission for them. This is part of the important work that goes on in Mormon temples throughout the world, this baptism for the dead, then sealing the marriage in the true church and so on, going through all of the rites that a present-day Mormon goes through. But you do it for your dead ancestor so that he will have all the privileges that you have.

Riess: What if you found out that there was some African blood in your ancestry? Wouldn't that be a sore spot?

Wilson: [laughter] Now it's all right. The president of the church, only about a couple of years ago, had a revelation from the Almighty that now the curse had been removed. I guess the belief was that the black people were part of the host of Satan who rebelled against God and were cast from heaven and for their rebellion they were given a black skin. That was their punishment. But now the latest revelation says that they have atoned. They have spent enough time being punished. Now they have atoned and now they can be welcomed back into full fellowship in the church.

Riess: Whitened! [laughter] It's fascinating.

Wilson: When you have traveled as I have, and met so many people of so many faiths as I have, I no longer make judgments. I no longer subscribe to any one set of beliefs because there are so many sets of beliefs. There are so many religions that claim to have the one way to heaven and if you don't take that way you'll never get there, that now I'm skeptical of them all and I think there are a great many [ways to get there]. I feel a little disloyal to my sturdy, courageous Mormon ancestors by implying and saying that I can't accept everything they accepted by any means. Still I'm proud of the record they established and the character they themselves exhibited.

Riess: What kind of people were they in their own countries? Hubert Howe Bancroft has a most ungenerous remark about the Mormon immigrants, that they were illiterate escapees from low wages, severe life, and harsh climate.

Wilson: Well, I guess that had been generally true. I think this offer of a better life and a better religion appealed to the downtrodden. My Grandfather Wilson began life as a coal miner in Scotland. Now, that is not a position of any high repute. I understand my Grandfather Garff's family originally was fairly well-to-do. They had a big house with servants, but they sold everything when they emigrated.

On the Hansen side, my great-grandfather, Olaf Hansen, was a tailor, and he continued when he got to Utah. He established a tailor shop. He lived to be ninety-three and I remember the old man. He was one of the most kindly, sweet people that I ever met. The children adored him because he was just a kindly, sweet old man who always had a piece of candy in his pocket for you, and would always take you on his lap, and was gentle and mild.

- Wilson: He had suffered a great deal of persecution. He was in prison for about fourteen months in Utah because he had a second wife! [laughter] He practiced polygamy before it was banned by the church, and it was his duty to take a second wife. There was really a sociological reason for that; with more women than men in a pioneer country, what are you going to do? You've got to populate barren deserts and so on.
- Riess: So this was a punishment?
- Wilson: I don't know. I guess he wouldn't divorce the one wife.
- Riess: Good for him!
- Wilson: He was in prison for about fourteen months, but would be completely uncomplaining, completely cooperative with everybody. There was no fussiness. Grandpa Hansen we called him.
- Riess: These Danish grandparents, did they still have a thick Danish accent?
- Wilson: I don't remember. I may have been so accustomed to it. I don't remember any accents at all! They must have had accents.
- Riess: Did they stick together, the ones who came from the original Danish shores?
- Wilson: Oh, no, as soon as they got to Utah and got established they mingled with the other Mormons, the community; they became a great part-- they were all one big Mormon family then, except for the natural instinct to visit the people who remember what you remember back in the old country.
- Riess: I should think that the people who came in the same immigration would be like an enormous brotherhood.
- Wilson: I don't remember that aspect of it. I remember most of my mother's family stayed in Logan, Utah. That was sort of a central place for the family, but my grandfather moved to Ogden. I well remember the days when suddenly a whole wagon full, and eventually an automobile full, of the Swedish-Danish relatives would descend upon the family without any announcement, bringing all kinds of food and all kinds of goodies with them, to spend the day. Then it was a great festival day.

The Scandinavians were very sociable. They talked and they laughed, and as kids we used to sit and marvel that [sighs] they could find so much to talk about! How can they keep talking all this time? I remember hearing Swedish spoken a great deal, but we

Wilson: never bothered to learn any Swedish. They had learned English because in those days, the faster you learned English, the faster you became a citizen and the better it was for you. This business of asking to have a ballot printed in Danish or Swedish was never thought of! You didn't do that. But those were jolly times when the relatives came. I regret that I didn't learn some Swedish then. I heard more Swedish than Danish.

My grandfather, Christian Garff, was a remarkable person too. He had not a day of schooling in this country. Whether he'd had any education before the age of ten in Denmark, I don't know. In mother's sketch of his life she says that she doesn't know either. But he crossed the plains and grew up then in Utah. The first thing that I recall that he established in Logan was a sawmill. He was always trusting a partner or somebody else and getting done out of his business. He was ruined a couple of times. Thus, he became quite austere and reserved and he became alienated from the church too. He had appealed to the church to right these wrongs for him, and they hadn't done anything for him. So he had become alienated. Then on his own--

Riess: Could it have been expected that the church would right these wrongs? Did they take that kind of a role?

Wilson: Oh, yes. In every what the church called a ward (it would be called a parish anyplace else), there's a bishop and a bishop's court. It can be called anytime if you don't want to go to a civil court. In those days, most of the good Mormons wanted to have it settled in the family.

Anyway, my grandfather became rather an austere, remote man and he worked with complete devotion to rebuild a business, which he did. He became a self-taught engineer. It's amazing for me to read that he build electric power plants in the town of American Fort, Utah. He built the water system which carried water from the little town of Huntsville through Ogden Canyon to the city of Ogden and that supplied the city of Ogden with water--well, they were still supplying it when I was a child in the 1920s before they had a new water system. He and his partner built the first electric lighting system in any city in Utah. That was in Logan and there's a monument to them in Logan now. He established many other things. After being ruined financially twice, he then built his own business and became very comfortably well-to-do.

I remember him as being dignified, a handsome man but forbidding. We were frightened of him. He didn't have any of the mildness and the sweetness that Great-Grandfather Hansen had. But he had real pride in the family and he would suddenly appear in Ogden and summon

Wilson: the relatives--he had two daughters and a son living in Ogden--he would summon them and all of the grandchildren for an evening and the grandchildren were then asked to perform, to do whatever you could. If you could play the piano, you had to play a piece for him. If you could recite a poem, you had to recite a poem. If you could sing, you would sing a song.

Grandfather would listen and if he was pleased with your performance, you got a dollar bill, which was a tremendous sum then. If he didn't think it was very good, why, you got nothing! [laughter] His visits were rather terrifying for the children because they knew they were going to have to perform. I think it was his way of trying to encourage them to develop some kind of a talent, to be able to do something.

His daughter Sylvia had a beautiful contralto voice and she also knew how to play the piano. She always would end the evening by doing a very stunning performance, including my Grandfather Garff's favorite, favorite piece. Do you know the old poem, "Barbara Fritchie?"

Riess: Yes.

Wilson: That's been set to music and it's a very stirring piece, and my Aunt Sylvia would sit at the piano and roll those trills and rolls and [reciting with a strong, deep voice] "up rose old Barbara Fritchie then, bowed low by her fourscore years and ten"--she was singing this. Grandfather would sit there with a great smile on his face. He just loved that piece, and that was repeated every time when we had a family gathering.

Riess: That's a song of the American revolution rather than of Ogden pioneering.

Wilson: The Civil War. The Mormons became very patriotic, of course. The story of the Mormon Battalion, which I know vaguely, the war with Mexico--as these wagon trains of immigrants were crossing the plains to Utah, they received word that they should furnish a certain number of able-bodied men for the United States Army and they formed the Mormon Battalion and marched down to California. They always believed in "rendering unto Caesar that which was Caesar's." They believed in obeying civil authority and whatnot.

Riess: Was your grandfather's effort to bring you children up to some kind of musical and so on standards, was that in recognition that it was a kind of cultural wasteland, or was it not a cultural wasteland?

Wilson: That may have been part of his legacy from the LDS Church because the LDS Church has all kinds of children's organizations and young people's organizations that encourage them to develop their talents whatever they may be. They encourage them to get up in church and perform, have all kinds of programs to make them perform. It may be that that was Grandfather's legacy from the church and he believed in it and kept prodding us to do that.

Riess: What did you particularly do?

Wilson: [laughter] I always spoke a piece, recited a poem or something. What they were I don't remember. I also was being forced to take piano lessons about that time. I was wretched! I may have stumbled through a few piano pieces. But speaking, orating, debating, acting, that was sort of my bag right from the beginning and I suppose I did something like that, although I don't remember any of my performances--thank goodness!

Riess: You say that it was his legacy from the church, but you were also attending church yourself weren't you?

Wilson: Oh, yes, my first acting was done in little church playlets. My first appearance before an audience was making little speeches. Then in Sunday school we had what was called the "memory gem." One pupil would get up and recite a little two- or four-line poem and the rest of the audience would respond and would repeat after them. That was the "memory gem." Every Sunday a child did that.

Riess: That's interesting. Where did that come from?

Wilson: I don't know where the church got it, but it was very much and is still very much a part of the church. This Osmond family, aren't they Mormons?*

Riess: Yes.

Wilson: Quite a few performing groups come out of there. But the idea is not to produce professional entertainers, but rather to develop the individual so he can participate in all church activities. If you can do any thing there are always calls from every little branch, every little chapel of the church. If you can sing or if you can

*Popular music performers.

- Wilson: speak or if you can play the piano, if you can play the flute or the xylophone, you will be invited over the circuit because they are mad for programs all of the time.
- Riess: Your aunt was named Sylvia. What was your mother's name?
- Wilson: Alva. My other aunt was named--we called it Hedwig. Some people call it Headwig. You'll find it in Ibsen's plays. There were four children: Hedwig, I guess the second was Carl (the one boy), then Sylvia, then Alva. But their mother died when she was only forty-four.
- Riess: What was her name?
- Wilson: Her name was Augusta Elizabeth Hansen, born in 1854, and she died in Ogden in 1898. So she was just forty-four years old.
- Riess: [laughter] When I see the transcript of this I hope it all falls into place for me in terms of getting a family tree together.
- Wilson: Let's summarize by saying on my mother's side was Christian Garff, who was married to Augusta Elizabeth Hansen. From that union came Hedwig, Carl, Sylvia, and Alva, the youngest. She was my mother. On my father's side there was Robert Bell Wilson, a Scotsman; Henrietta Emmett, English and Irish; and from them, my father, who was named Robert Emmett Wilson, came. He had two brothers, one of whom died in infancy, and, let's see, how many sisters? Aunt Belle, Aunt Flora, Aunt Cora, and Aunt Jeanie. He had four sisters.

The Wilsons in Ogden, Utah

- Riess: Robert Bell Wilson had been a coal miner. What did he do when he came here?
- Wilson: When he moved to Ogden he began working for the railroad, I guess the Union Pacific, because as you discovered, Ogden is a rail center. It was some kind of an administrative post. He did not work in the yard as an engineer or a switchman or anything like that. He did very well because he was able to build a row of houses. He owned about five houses when I was a kid and was considered a man of property. He was a delightful, good-natured Scotsman, also a very kindly person, one whom children loved. He would stop in at our house on his way to get milk.

Wilson: Back in Utah in--let's see, Grandfather died in 1916, so before 1916 you took your pail down to a farm bordering the town and got fresh milk from the cow out there and you carried it in your pail, which had a cover on it, back to your own home. (I don't know how many people have seen this.) Then the housewife emptied it--say you had a gallon of milk--in various shallow pans overnight to let the cream rise. Then in the morning you skimmed the cream off of the milk, the cream for one thing and the milk for the other.

Grandfather, on his way to or from getting the milk in the evening, would always stop at our house and visit with the children for a few minutes and we adored him. I remember his death. It was quite traumatic. I was seven when he died. It was a great loss when Grandfather Wilson died. [pause] But an interesting thing, I was born in the same room of the same house where my father was born in 1877. This was the first little house which my Grandfather Wilson built in Ogden. It was the original family residence on 27th Street and it's still there, well over a hundred years old.

Riess: When it was built it was probably First Street?

Wilson: No, it was still 27th Street it was called. Then when Grandfather got more prosperous he built next to it a fine brick house. It looked like a mansion to us kids then. A brick house, it had an upstairs, a downstairs, and so on. It was separated from the original house only by not more than ten or twelve feet, which I remember because as a naughty little boy, if I got punished, I would go into the bathroom which was right close to my grandfather's house and I would start howling as loudly as I could. My Grandmother Wilson was a very important, executive kind of lady, and she would immediately come storming over. "What are you doing to that poor child?" she would ask my mother. [laughter] My mother caught on to my trick pretty soon! She would lock me on the other side of the house where I couldn't be heard if I howled.

But the houses were very close together. Then Grandfather owned two houses on the other side and one or two houses on each side of this, so he owned half a block along there. The other Emmetts settled across the street. That was a nice part of town at that time. The last time I was in Ogden, it's become a ghetto area now, except the two original houses still look pretty good. We took pictures of them. It's surprising.

Riess: It sounds like the daughters didn't get very far away from their families in that generation.

Wilson: That's right.

Wilson: On the Wilson side, my Uncle Roy went to medical school in Chicago. He was the one that got the most education. My father was taken out of school at the fifth grade and never got anything more, which was a terrible mistake. But his brother got a medical education and settled in Chicago and practiced medicine there for a while. He eventually ended [up] back in Ogden though, practicing medicine and dispensing free medical care [laughter] to all the family. My father stayed in Ogden until the whole family moved to Los Angeles, supposedly for six months, in 1927 and they never left.

Riess: What were the circumstances of your father being taken out of school?

Wilson: His mother, Henrietta Emmett Wilson, believed that it was a better way to rear him than to leave him in the school. I never did quite understand that, but she thought that--

Riess: Was the school run by the church?

Wilson: No, no. this was a public school. But she thought that it would do him good, strengthen his character, and teach him how to take care of money and so on to put him to work as a messenger boy at the railroad. The railroad headquarters were there in Ogden. He started out where his father could keep an eye on him. He came up in the ranks in the railroad and should have stayed there, but he didn't.

He never was a very good provider, unfortunately. He was a likeable person, but never knew how to handle money, and to think his mother thought he would learn! He never learned because she thwarted him by having him turn all the money over to her! He didn't have the opportunity of handling his own money. She dispensed it as she thought he needed it. [sighs] She was a stern, Anglo-Irish female.

Riess: They ran the families, I suppose.

Wilson: Oh, yes, yes, they did.

None of her daughters left town. They all married and settled in Ogden. One of them, my Aunt Flora, moved to Salt Lake City. But it was fairly closely knit as church families tended to be.

Riess: Was there an effort on the part of this strong Mormon community to bring in good teachers?

Wilson: Oh, yes, I should say so, and to supplement what the public schools did, what the public schools offered, you went to Sunday school, you went to what they called a religious class, you went to primary, you went to the Mutual Improvement Association, and they tried to supplement all kinds of education.

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Wilson: My mother graduated from high school and taught school. If you had a high school diploma you were able to teach school and around 1902 or 1903 she taught elementary school. I remember her telling me it was a magnificent salary of \$25 a month. That was the salary--\$25 a month! I think she was the only one though in her family who got a high school education. I think my Uncle Carl, the son, had to go and work with his father right as soon as he was able--as carpenter, as assistant engineer, he could do all sorts of things. I know my Aunt Sylvia got a musical education. She was taught to play the piano and to sing. They undoubtedly had elementary education. They weren't shortchanged as my father was. They got through whatever girls went through at that time. I don't think all the girls went on to high school as my mother did because that was quite an accomplishment to get a high school diploma.

These things seem for you and for my young friends so remote, such ancient history, and yet it seems to me what is remarkable about the United States is so much has happened in so short a time. The leap forward has been so short. We as a nation were only two hundred years old in 1976 and there are still widows of Civil War veterans drawing pensions, I read in the paper. But it kind of boggles my mind to think that I'm recalling all these things which are as remote as pioneer history, and yet I was caught on the very tail end of it. I remember hearing and seeing people. I remember the first Sunday drives we took were in the horse and buggy, not in an automobile.

Riess: The sense of the land of opportunity.

Wilson: That's right, and the land where you could make anything of yourself that you chose to make and where you wanted to become an American. You were proud of your background, but your first wish, as I remember those Swedish and Danish ancestors of mine, their first wish was to know English well, be citizens, be able to vote, and fully participate in citizenship. It was a very strong feeling they had.

Riess: So that meant saying "no" to the old ways, unlike Solvang or places like that where they have festival days.*

*Danish community in California.

Wilson: That's right. That is a later development, it seemed to me. I think the immigrants in the middle of the 19th century wanted to become Americans very fast and wanted to forget the old ways, and their kids didn't want to learn the language. But now we're old enough and mature enough, so we say, "Why, you can still be a 100 percent American and yet be proud of your ethnic background and your cultural heritage from another country," and that's why we have these revivals all over and costumes and so on. But I don't remember seeing anybody in native costume in my time. No, you were an American. You had your own costume and you used your own American English, nothing else.

Riess: Were any of your ancestors real pillars of the church?

Wilson: I'm trying to think whether any of them became bishops or so on. My own mother was a pillar of the church and she was quite an executive type. She was president of the Relief Society in her ward in Los Angeles. She was stake president. (Various wards make up a larger unit called a stake.) She was stake president of the Mutual Improvement Association and, oh, she's been active as a teacher. My father did his best work as a teacher in Sunday school for twelve-year-old boys called the Deacons and being a Scout leader for twelve-year-old boys. He was very good at that. But my Grandfather Garff became embittered with the church. My Grandmother Garff died. I don't know what she did in the church.

On the Wilson side I don't remember them. They were churchgoers but not church leaders.

Riess: Was there any recourse for your father if he had objected to being removed from school? Your Grandmother Henrietta Wilson wouldn't have been talked out of it by any other member of the family or talked out of it by her own husband?

Wilson: I was too young (when my Grandfather Wilson died I was seven) to really have any sense of their relationship. I know he was a kindly man. She was kind of a stern person. She had the best lawn on the street in front of her house. The kids were afraid to go and play or run across her lawn. You avoided Mrs. Wilson's lawn; you stayed away from that or otherwise she'd catch you! [laughter]

I don't know what their relationship was, whether she was dominant or whether he quietly would have his way when he wanted to. But my father didn't get a very good start. Perhaps had he stayed with the railroad and allowed them to promote him and to adjust him to various jobs--but he went out free-lancing, doing this and that and the other and never very good at anything. He never had the background to make him very good at anything.

Riess: Was the life in Ogden urban or country? You talked about going to get the milk.

Wilson: We thought it was urban at the time. It's a matter of relativity. Ogden was the second largest city in the state of Utah and there was a kind of rivalry with Salt Lake City. We had a streetcar system. It was a very good system running all over, little Toonerville trolleys on their tracks. The automobiles started to encroach more and more and we were taught to be very careful when we crossed the streets.

But it was a safe town. You could send a child with a note clear to the other side of town, or to a neighbor or to a shop, and have him come back and be sure he'd be safe, except to watch when you crossed the streets there. I could take my little wagon and go down to the central business district where the super-markets (they would seem very small compared to our supermarkets) with Saturday specials appeared when I was a child. Mother would give me a list and I had a wagon that you'd pull along and go there and you'd have the list. There were clerks then who got the stuff and filled your order and put it in the wagon and you paid the money or they put it down and you went back.

There were houses all around us, but there were vacant lots in almost every block where I remember we could go, and there was space. They were full of weeds. One had an apple tree in it and one had an old barn in it you could climb around in. But it wasn't like being on a farm by any means. You didn't have the farm regimen.

Riess: Did you have a kitchen garden?

Wilson: Oh, yes, everybody had a garden and everybody had chickens and sometimes rabbits and so on. You knew your neighbors too all over. Here I've lived in my present Berkeley address, this is the fifteenth year, and I know the neighbors on two sides of me and across the street and that's all. Who is down two doors, I have no idea. That was a small town then--30 to 35,000 people--but that was big for the early part of the 20th century.

Riess: Was it growing?

Wilson: Yes.

Riess: Did the lots fill in right away?

Wilson: No, it grew slowly and it still has grown slowly. It's much bigger. It's about 50 or 55,000 now, I think. It has a four-year college and so on. But it was a village life verging on town or city life. Mail was delivered twice a day to you. It had two daily newspapers.

Riess: That's excellent!

Wilson: Yes, two daily newspapers there. I didn't deliver a newspaper, but I delivered groceries, and before that I had a Saturday Evening Post route [pronounces it "root"], but we called it route then [pronounced to rhyme with "out"]. It was essentially a city life, but a simple, mild, safe kind of life. You'd have to drive only a very short distance to find the farm where there was a little farm house and barn surrounded by fields and animals and all that sort of thing. I don't think they allowed you to keep a cow except on the outskirts. I'm sure originally they had cows and goats in the city, but now the city had a sanitation department. [laughter]

Riess: Was there a library?

Wilson: Oh, yes, the Carnegie Free Library, and on the façade it said "in the education of its people lies the safety of the republic." I'll never forget that. We had our own little libraries in junior high school and the high school, but the Carnegie Free Library in the center of town, right in the civic center of town, that's the place I remember well. We went when we were just kids to get books of all kinds before we had to study and go and use the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature and that sort of thing. It was a delightful place. You could go to the library--we lived several blocks away--but it was perfectly safe to go to the library and draw out your books and carry them home and devour them. Oh, that was a lovely time.

Riess: Was your family interested in politics?

Wilson: My father, having no money at all, was proud to be a Republican and aligned himself with the wealthier citizens of the town! I remember him taking me now and then to political rallies. I think I remember a torchlight rally. Those small towns were very lively politically. They thought they were important.

Riess: Probably World War I would have drawn out the torchlights.

Wilson: That was coming. That was coming.

Riess: Presidents coming through?

Wilson: I remember Woodrow Wilson driving through. They let us out of school. I was in elementary school and we all stood along the street curb and watched him drive through waving in an open car. One rival school which was next to us had to yell a chant they had dreamed up which made us very jealous because they all chanted in unison, "One, two, three, four, whom are you going to vote for? Wilson!" to shout just as he went by and he was very pleased by that. He's the only president I remember coming through the town.

Riess: How about the suffragists? They made their way across country.

Wilson: I have no memory of them whatsoever.

Riess: I guess they would probably have bypassed a Mormon community!

Wilson: Yes, that probably is it. The Mormons didn't believe--they don't believe in the ERA now. [laughter] So they could not have believed in it then. The woman's place was to rear the family, to be a good wife and mother and churchgoer. That's what they were for.

My mother was the capable one in the family. She could have been a business executive, but it would have been unthinkable to allow her to go to work. Now, a few women, I remember, did and made careers for themselves. They were viewed with some skepticism although with some admiration too--you know, "So-and-so, she's doing this, doing that." On both sides of the family it would be unthinkable, although my Aunt Hedwig, because her husband died young, leaving her with four little kids, Grandfather Garff set her up in a little corner grocery store. [He] built a little building and the grocery was in one corner of it and her living quarters were in the rest of it. This was considered respectable for a widow.

Riess: Were women judged by their offspring?

Wilson: Oh, yes, sure.

Riess: So long as you could manage to produce shining children--

Wilson: That's right, children who got A's or could recite poems [laughter], or one who could play baseball or who was a good fisherman and so on, you could be proud of that, yes. Sure, it was family-centered.

Riess: How many siblings did you have?

Wilson: Three sisters, one older and two younger.

Riess: Let's have their names.

Wilson: My older sister is Helen. She's three years older than I am. Then I came.

Riess: Can I have your date of birth?

Wilson: January 9, 1909 is the real date. My next sister is Margaret. She was born in 1914, as I recall. My sister Janice, the youngest, was born in 1918. I'm sure of that because Father called her a victory baby because the Armistice came November 11, 1918, didn't it?

Riess: Yes. Your name is marvelous, full of history. It was unusual to give you the family name for a first name?

Wilson: Garff Bell Wilson, yes. I think it's in most languages a first name; I think the English equivalent is Garff and that the Welsh equivalent is Gareth. I think this is basically a surname, but the Scandinavians had a way of using the first names as surnames. They often added "son" to it. Wilson would be "son of Will"; Nielson, "son of Niels"; Olafson, "son of Olaf" and so on. I don't understand exactly how it came into the family, but it did.

[Interview 2: March 6, 1980]##

Wilson: I was born in the same house as my father, in the same room. I'm told by my mother that it was--or did we cover this last time, the actual circumstances?

The doctor had been there earlier in the morning and examined Mother and told her that he wouldn't need to return until that evening. Then around 12:30, just after noon, she started to have labor pains. My very competent grandmother came over and took charge and my grandfather decided he would try and find the doctor. Well, they telephoned around and couldn't locate him, so Grandfather hitched up his horse and buggy and went driving all over town [laughter] yelling for Dr. Clark! I have a vision of him lashing the horses!

He finally found the doctor and he hopped into the buggy and they dashed back, by which time, I am told, I was half-born under my grandmother's supervision, and then the doctor took over and soon it was all successfully accomplished. Grandmother, who had been a tower of strength, moved into the other room and collapsed--fainted dead away over the strain of the thing. But in those days you didn't go to the hospital. You had a nurse on call and a doctor ready and relatives nearby to help out, and that's the story of my advent into the world, which I do not recall.

Education in Ogden

Wilson: All my schooling through high school was in the city of Ogden, and as I look back on it, I am proud of the sound academic education I had. I am also amused to think that all of us in those city schools would have been considered by today's standards underprivileged. For example, there was not an elementary school, junior high school, or high school gymnasium in any one of them. There was no swimming pool in any one of them. In high school we had a football team and we had a basketball team, but that's all I recall. The football team practiced in a vacant lot and then the boys went home and showered at home. So did the basketball team.

One of the big activities in Ogden High School was Junior ROTC. The town thought this was wonderful and the unit there had developed a real esprit de corps and all of us then in high school aspired to be an officer in the ROTC. Where did we drill? We didn't have any drill field. We'd drill on the streets. In winter we'd slosh through the ice and snow on the city streets, and did all of our drilling and maneuvering there. Then once a year we'd have a review. The headquarters would send a high-ranking officer to review the troops and we had our review in the city park.

But when you think back, we had nothing like free lunches. We had no psychiatrists. We had no school nurse. We had good academic classes. We took mathematics and language and science and history and English and so on.

Riess: Was it a homogeneous group?

Wilson: Yes, it was quite homogeneous. I don't remember any blacks in my high school, although there were blacks in the town. We lived in an area where black families were not very far away. I remember two or three Oriental students in my high school class. But it was pretty much middle-class whites, immigrants--immigrants we had in my elementary school. We had three or four boys named Henry, all of Dutch ancestry--Henry Neutaboom, for example. Then in the neighborhood we had a family named D'Evelyn and I always thought it was spelled D-e-v-i-l-i-n. It was D'Evelyn, a very aristocratic name. We had some Italian families in the neighborhood because during Prohibition the scandal of the neighborhood was that one family was raided one night and a wine-making still was found in the basement! [laughter] That seems naïve now.

Riess: Now are these second or third generation?

Wilson: My contemporaries were about third generation from immigrant families; some of them second.

Riess: The families believed in education as the way up.

Wilson: They certainly did, and were happy with the opportunities we had. They were happy with the school they got. The idea that we would demonstrate or protest or find fault with that never occurred to anybody.

In retrospect now, I'm sorry I didn't attend any school that had a gymnasium where you could learn games. We learned them in the street if we wanted to, but my parents didn't approve much of playing in the street, going off with the bad boys or the big boys who would teach small boys all sorts of lurid things!

Anyway, when I got to Cal as a freshman then I discovered I couldn't do anything. In those days at Cal--now, this was in the fall of 1926 when I registered as a freshman--during your first two years it was mandatory that you take certain physical education classes because at the end of two years you had to pass an agility test, a swimming test, and a defense test, or you couldn't receive what was then called your junior certificate, which enabled you then to go on to upper division work.

This was a very good thing for me because it forced me to learn things that I didn't learn in my preliminary training. I learned to swim here and that's been a great pleasure all the rest of my life. The agility test included running and jumping and climbing over walls and so on. We took some kind of a course in that. Then for the defense test you could take a course in boxing or wrestling or fencing. I took a course in boxing. I weighed in at Cal at 105 pounds. There was no one else in the boxing class that light. The other lightest person weighed about 135, so he had thirty pounds on me. Boy, did I hate that class, because I got beat up every class! [laughter] But anyway, as I look back, I am delighted that the university then made those things mandatory. Now they don't.

Some of them could pass the test without taking any courses and then they took whatever other courses they liked. You had to take physical education here during your first two years, but you weren't required to take these particular ones.

In retrospect I think I might have had some athletic ability in some lighter things like tennis or track and so on. But my upbringing in Ogden never brought out any of those things at all. That's the one deficiency in the schooling I had there, but more important was the sound, basic academic education that we all got.

Riess: Was there Latin and Greek?



Wilson as a high school actor in Booth Tarkington's
 "Clarence," Spring 1925, Ogden High School, Ogden, Utah



Garff Wilson, 1931
 UC Berkeley Senior



Captain Garff Wilson
 Adjutant Generals Corps
 Spring 1946

Wilson: Well, we had Latin. Greek wasn't offered in my high school, but I had three years of Latin in high school and I took Latin my first year here at Cal. Then I was talked out of taking further Latin by my fraternity brothers. My Latin professor was Clifton Price. I well remember that freshman course in Latin because he loved to ramble on about Berkeley history and about what was happening in the United States. I didn't realize until the first midterm came that every assignment that we had not discussed in class we were nevertheless responsible for! [laughter] We were responsible for having learned those things on our own and after that we buckled down much harder, all the freshmen in that particular course.

Drama and Speech

Wilson: But I want to go back to my education in Ogden, Utah. My interest in drama and speech originated there. The first plays I was in were church plays. Each of the wards usually gave a play or two during the year, and when they needed a kid or a small boy, I was cast in the play. The elocution teacher of the town, who was usually hired to direct the play, was named Minnie Moore Brown. [chuckles] I still remember her name. We thought she was a wonderfully gifted director. But my first memories of being in plays [were of being] under church tutelage. Under church tutelage too, we appeared before Sunday school audiences and made little speeches and, as I told you last time, gave "memory gems."

Then in the seventh grade (this was at Lewis Junior High School) I was asked to make a speech as part of a final public program. They didn't have commencement or graduation exercises in junior high school. But the school had an open house running two nights in which all of the classrooms had projects on display. In the little study hall, which was the best they had for an auditorium, they had a program presenting the talented youngsters. I made a speech there on the history and achievements of the state of Utah. [laughter] In the seventh grade! Then in the eighth grade on the history and achievements of Ogden, the city. (We had three years in junior high school and three years in high school.) In the ninth grade I was still there and made another speech on American ideals. That was the name of it.

Riess: Was this all your own original work or were you helped on a speech like that?

Wilson: My mother was the one who thought to be a spellbinding orator was just the greatest accomplishment a child could reach, so she helped me extensively with all the early speeches, very much so. Then gradually I achieved the knack of it and started to do it on my own. But she taught me.

Riess: Helped you in the delivery?

Wilson: No, in the composition of it. I remember sitting with her, trying to figure out the right word here and a simpler way of saying this there. Through imitation and discussion I learned a great deal from her.

The delivery was coached by English teachers. We didn't have a so-called speech or drama teacher until I went to high school. But [I learned] through the church and plays, and through junior high school and making speeches. When I arrived in high school my principal activities there were on the debate team and in the oratorical contests and in the plays.

Riess: You were able to do all of the academic stuff easily and had time?

Wilson: We were taught to study at home. We never were allowed to play until all our study was done.

Riess: Did you have after-school jobs or piano practice or things like that?

Wilson: Oh, yes, I had piano practice for a little while, but I couldn't take it. But yes, my first job after school was a Saturday Evening Post route. Then I got a job delivering groceries on my bicycle. Then in high school I got a weekend job sometimes as an usher in one of the movie theaters there. In the summer I worked as a bellhop at my great-uncle's hotel up in Ogden Canyon. So it was a full schedule. But we were dutiful children. We were raised to place duty first. It never occurred to us to rebel or to disobey.

Riess: The disciplinarian in your family--

Wilson: That's my mother and not my father. My father was a very likeable person, but on the whole a weak person who exerted not much influence within the family, and that meant Mother had to do both the father's jobs and the mother's jobs. Consequently she became a very strong person, a very dominating person. Whether she had it naturally in her nature or whether it was forced upon her, I don't know. When I'm with my sisters now we continually talk about that because my mother lived to be ninety-five. She died in May of 1977 at the ripe old age of ninety-five and exerted influence over her family right

- Wilson: up until the end. We all conspired to keep her happily ignorant of activities we indulged in which she didn't approve of! [laughter] We learned to be very careful.
- Riess: Were you considered to be underweight and was there a program to fatten you up constantly that you remember?
- Wilson: No. Now there would be, and I was skinny and underweight. Nobody paid any attention to that--"Oh, he'll grow up, he'll be the wiry type, it doesn't matter." I don't remember anybody fussing over it or worrying about it. I wish they had a little bit now. I wish I had had a little more physical development--actually body building and that sort of thing--since later on when I learned to do some sports I discovered I was pretty good at them when I learned them right. For example, one summer we took up horseback riding, all my sisters and myself. We went to a regular riding academy in southern California and I was the star of the class. I was always given the best horses to ride because I caught onto it and did it very well--jumping, learning to jump when the thing ended.

I learned to play badminton, which doesn't require bulk as far as weight, and was a good badminton player. So I thought to myself, if I had ever been encouraged to, or ever had the opportunity--there wasn't much opportunity in town. Some of the boys did, but I wasn't strongly enough motivated. I did other things.

ROTC

- Riess: Were you attracted by the ROTC and the military?
- Wilson: Oh, indeed, yes. We all aspired to be officers and I became a first lieutenant, an adjutant of one of the battalions. The irony of history is that when I was drafted into the Army at the beginning of the Second World War, what did I end up as? The first lieutenant adjutant of a battalion! [laughter] I eventually made captain because I got into a higher headquarters as an assistant adjutant general. But this was really something that amused me, knowing about it, and I think it was pure chance.
- Riess: You could say, "I've been here before!"
- Wilson: Yes, "I've been here before," and in a military review, the adjutant is the one who calls the battalion to attention, lines them up, and then says, "Guides post." Then says, "Sir, all present and accounted for" to the commanding officer, and then takes his place beside the commanding officer and slightly to the rear. I knew how to do that in the Second World War. The drill hadn't changed! [laughter] They were still doing the same thing.

Riess: I guess the similarities to public ceremonies are enormous.

Wilson: [chuckles] Well, in a sense.

Riess: Did Ogden lose a lot of these young men then in World War I? Are you describing ROTC after--

Wilson: After the First World War, yes. I was in high school from 1923 to 1926. But the pride in the military was still very much current in the town, and our ROTC unit had a wonderful band, and it was a civic feature. Anytime there was a parade in town, anytime there was a civic celebration, if you could get the high school band, why, that was a prize because they did play very well and they always led the parades. Also, if there were any big public function where the high school cadets could parade, we were invited to do so and made a handsome showing, I'm sure, because we were the pride of the town. The idea that anybody was against ROTC or pacifist and didn't believe in the military, that idea never occurred to me while we were in high school.

Actually I came with that idea to Cal where in 1926 everybody took two years of ROTC. All of the men students took two years of ROTC, but the attitude was much different. [sighs] Many of the men hated it and decided not to proceed to upper division ROTC. We were too smart and we were sure there wasn't going to be another war. I went through a real era of being a pacifist and sure there wasn't going to be another war because it would destroy everything. So why take upper division ROTC? Why get a commission? It would be useless. Ha! The stupid ones who remained in upper division and got a commission--perhaps most of them let their commissions lapse--but when the Second World War broke on us (Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941) all of these commission guys were recalled as officers, were given longevity pay back to the time of their graduation--

Riess: Oh!

Wilson: That's right. The "smart ones" like myself, we were drafted as buck privates, and the majors and the colonels and so on, who were our buddies who had been so stupid as to take upper division ROTC...

So if any young men come to me now saying, "I'm not going to take ROTC" or "should I?" I'm afraid I have reached the conclusion, in view of the history of the world (and there have always been wars), that I would say, "I think it would be wise to get a commission the easy way and be prepared for the worst." It's not a popular thing for anybody to say now, but I don't know how you can avoid that conclusion, especially when you look at the areas of tension in the world today, and the possibilities of war today. We've never been without them, unfortunately, and no civilization has ever been without it.

- Wilson: One of the greatest tragedies, it seems to me, in world history is the fact that the golden age of Greece ended in that suicidal Peloponnesian War where Athens was finally defeated by Sparta, and so that phenomenal flowering was stunted, was ended, by warfare. Even Greeks, smart as they were--they invented democracy, they invented philosophy, they invented everything--they could never live without war. They never found out how to do that.
- Riess: Ogden in the twenties: what were your friends' plans and ambitions? Was it a place to get away from?
- Wilson: No. There was a junior college run by the Mormon church, Weber College, in town. Students who aspired to a college education often had the first year or two there. That eventually became a public junior college. The church withdrew completely from it. It is now a four-year college, Weber State College, in Ogden, and it's a fairly large, prosperous institution now. But it started out as a church junior college. My sister went there for a year and then went to the University of Utah.

The wealthier families in town sent their sons and daughters to Salt Lake City to the University of Utah. Some of them interested in agriculture and that sort of thing went to what we called then the A.C. in Logan, Utah. That was the Agricultural College. It's now Utah State University in Logan. But that's getting ahead.

Reva Beck

- Wilson: How I happened to come to Cal is a little bit--I want to say something about the two teachers in high school who had the greatest influence on me, and they turned out to be remarkable women, both of them. My last two years we had as the speech and drama teacher a woman named Reva Beck. She's now known, and still alive in Washington, D.C., as Judge Reva Beck Bosone (she married and then divorced). She was a young, dynamic, red-headed woman who had so much magnetism and charisma that she immediately became the idol of the school. When the classes were out in the afternoon at four o'clock, everybody wanted to gather in Miss Beck's room just to enjoy her.

She took a program of oratory and debating and drama, which had been just barely surviving, limping along, and, my goodness, we won everything under her tutelage. The debate teams were winning. I won the Lewis Oratorical Contest in my junior year under her coaching. I had a leading part in a play as a junior, and I had the lead in "Seven Keys to Baldpate" in my senior year.

Wilson: Now, a handicap was that we didn't have any theater or any auditorium in high school either. So when we gave the plays we rented the Orpheum Theater. It was great and we had a professional stage crew and professional scenery. We didn't have shops or anybody to do that. We moved in like a roadshow. They provided the scenery and the electricians and everything. We usually had just one or two rehearsals down there and we gave the play a couple of nights down there. Oh, it was so thrilling to be in a professional theater!

Riess: What other things would come to the Orpheum Theater? Did you have a lot of exciting roadshows that came through?

Wilson: Yes, we did. Of course, there was a regular Pantages Vaudeville Circuit that brought a different variety show there once a week during most of the season. Then I saw my first opera there, which was Faust. This was a Utah State opera company. The leading soprano was a member of the Mormon Church called Emma Lucy Gates (I remember her name), and she organized this opera company and would take it around to the towns. I'm trying to think of some of the legitimate plays, the straight plays, that I saw there.

Riess: Did you see any Ibsen, any Shaw, and Strindberg--

Wilson: Not that I remember. I think I saw Shaw's St. Joan there at the Orpheum Theater.

Riess: Sarah Bernhardt? Isadora Duncan?

Wilson: I simply am blank on big names that I might have seen. I just remember the ritual of getting there. The gallery (the top balcony) was available to students for 25¢. Of course, it was desirable to be in the front row of that top gallery. So if the show began at eight o'clock, you gathered on the outdoor iron stairway leading up to it at about four o'clock in the afternoon, bringing your sandwiches, your peanuts, and your apples, and you sat there and waited until they finally opened the doors and then you rushed for the front row seats.

It was wonderfully exciting. I just remember the thrill, not of the individual shows, but the thrill of being in the theater. There was always a pit orchestra in those days. The unions hadn't made them so expensive you couldn't have it. The orchestra came in and we had the overture and the house lights went down and the stage lights came up and then the curtain rose. It's a thrill that I never, never lost--except now you go over to A.C.T. and they have

Wilson: no curtain!* Everything is revealed right from the beginning and [you lose] some of the anticipation of wondering what the scenery is going to be like.

Well, the fact that Reva Beck Bosone was a remarkable woman is shown in her subsequent career. She taught high school in Ogden for--I don't know--longer than four or five years. She went back to the University of Utah and got a law degree. She practiced law for a while. Then she ran for the Utah State legislature and was elected there for two or three terms and became speaker of the lower house. Then when she had had enough experience there, she ran for a city judgeship in Salt Lake City and became the terror of her friends because if any friend was brought before her on any charge whatever--

Riess: No mercy.

Wilson: No mercy! "You are smart enough to know better!" [laughter] Then she ran for Congress in Utah and was elected to two terms in Congress as a Democrat. Then she ran for a third term, but it was during the Eisenhower years and the Republican landslide buried her. But she stayed in Washington as legal advisor for one of the house committees. Then when John F. Kennedy was elected president, he appointed her the judicial officer for the whole Post Office department and that was her last job until she retired.

Well, the surprising thing to me was that midway in her career, or after I was established here, I discovered that Reva Beck got her A.B. from the University of California at Berkeley. She had gone to a junior college in Salt Lake City, I think, and then her mother, as I remember her telling me, who had visited the Berkeley campus once, said, "I want my daughter to go there." So Reva came here and she is an alumna of Cal, but her career has been not here but in Utah and in Washington, D.C. How many high school teachers go on and have a dazzling career like that? I'm still in correspondence with her. She tells me that a biography of her has been written and it will be published shortly. I don't know what it's called.

However, we brought her back during the centennial year. One of the projects was the publication of a book, with essays by Cal alumni in all kinds of fields. The thesis was: "Did Cal in particular give me anything that was of real value?" Irving Stone

*American Conservatory Theater, San Francisco.

Wilson: edited the book. There Was Light is the title. Reva Beck, being a female in government service, contributed an essay to that and she came back when the book was published. They all got centennial citations and so on. It was a very successful project.

Theater in the Family

Riess: All this romance of the theater and the curtain going up, etc., was there a possibility of your just joining a roadshow and running away? Would you have been tempted?

Wilson: Yes. Well, I wasn't really tempted because I was raised to be such a dutiful, obedient son. However, there was the hope that somehow this would turn out. But as soon as I got this scholarship, then my family said, "Now, of course, you must finish college first and then you can think about a career in the theater or becoming an actor or something like that."

Riess: Would Reva Beck have discouraged your serious interest in the theater?

Wilson: No, no, she encouraged me. She had a brother or maybe two brothers who were on stage. But she was wise enough not to interfere with family advice and counsel, although indirectly talking about the world of the theater that she knew from her brothers. She had been in a play or two here on the Berkeley campus, but then she said she lost her ability to memorize lines and that ended her career in the theater.

I remember her telling me about her brothers on the stage and building up the interest and the glamour, and she always encouraged us to go to plays. And she was a fine director. She was good at anything that she chose to do.

It made me, being a leading man and so on, and being an officer in the ROTC, being on the yearbook staff, and being on the debate team and so on, it made me a big man in high school. I was accepted by everybody in the top echelon of students, and I was the best student too. [laughter] I was valedictorian. So it was a lovely, happy time, as I look back on it. I didn't have any money. I worked on the weekends. I paid for my own clothes. But there were other compensations--being accepted as a person, as somebody in this smallish town.

- Wilson: The dates I had in high school were mostly with the daughters of one of the Eccleses. Now, the Eccles family was the wealthiest family in town. Marriner Eccles later became chairman of the Federal Reserve System of the United States. I don't know whether that was Louise's uncle or some relative. Anyway, the Eccles family was the wealthiest and the most socially prominent family. I, who was living down in kind of a ghetto area, had dates with the daughter of the wealthiest man!
- Riess: Were those dates conducted on foot or did you have a car?
- Wilson: Well, my father did have a car and I could use it. Otherwise, we shared a car with somebody else. She never had to come pick me up and see my house. I could go pick her up at the glamorous Eccles mansion, which had a ballroom in the basement. [laughter]
- Riess: We are talking about the middle of the twenties, the "flaming youth" period.
- Wilson: Yes. We learned to do the Charleston. We wore knickers--a few of the boys in high school--golf knickers. They were very daring and if you got caught without two or three of your buddies around you, why, the other gang would strip the knickers off you! [laughter]
- Riess: How about smoking and drinking? Did you ever do that?
- Wilson: A few daring souls did it, but there was never any problem. I was never tempted to smoke and I don't remember ever being tempted to drink at times. It simply wasn't a problem at the high school parties--
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- Wilson: The standards were the standards of a smaller community and a very moral, ethical, religious community, not only the LDS religion but a good Catholic church was there and good Protestant churches, and they shared in the same standards. I don't remember ever having really a problem with smoking or drinking or sexual escapades. The big thing was necking.
- Riess: Necking and knickers, eh?
- Wilson: Yes, necking and knickers! The girls who were well brought up wouldn't do any necking after a date at night, and if you were a good, good boy you wouldn't ask. If you were in love though, and going steady, then everybody said, "Well, that's different." But it wasn't casual. I remember my best friend was a guy named Jerry Wallwork and he fell in love with a beautiful gal named Mary Rich. Oh, it was the romance of the year and we would share dates. I

Wilson: would be in the front seat with my date, and Jerry and Mary in the back seat, petting and necking. But they were in love. They were going steady. She wore his ring and this made it all right.

Riess: Did the plays that came into town show a different kind of life?

Wilson: No, they were either situation comedies or melodramas, nothing like that. No, I don't remember ever seeing the Ibsen-type play, the social problem play. They were the popular plays that the Syndicate and the Shubert Brothers sent on the road.

It's a little strange that my family had this attitude toward the stage because on my father's side of the family there was a very famous theatrical group. My Emmett grandmother's sister named Sarah begot three or four daughters and her husband determined that he was going to make these daughters famous. They were my father's first cousins, my second cousins, and, by golly, they became famous!

Maggie became Margaret Romaine, a leading soprano at the Metropolitan Opera. Nanny (and I don't remember what Nanny's real name is) became a leading soprano at Covent Garden in London. Hazel, who is the one I do know best, became the famous Hazel Dawn, a Ziegfeld star. At the age of eighteen she was starred in a Ziegfeld production called "The Pink Lady" in which she sang and acted and played the violin, and became famous as "the pink lady." She remained a Ziegfeld star in New York for years. Then there was a fourth daughter, Eleanor, who became a New York actress. She wasn't as famous or a toast of the town the way Hazel was in her heyday, but she was a very successful, professional actress doing the regular light comedies and melodramas and so on.

So on my father's side there was this very famous group of four sisters, and yet my mother thought that this wouldn't be the thing for me, that it was a corrupt world, the world of the stage. I don't remember whether I ever said, "How about Hazel and Maggie and Nanny? They're all on the stage, Mother." "Oh, well," maybe she would have said, "But Uncle Ed is always with those girls keeping his eye on them." Uncle Ed had them all trained. He gave up his own career to watch over them, was their manager and was their trainer, and he made a very good living out of his girls, his daughters! [laughter] So there is a little bit of theater on my father's side of the family, but still there was a great deal of prejudice on the Scandinavian side of the family.

Laying the Ghosts of Ogden

Riess: Did your parents coming to live in Los Angeles have anything to do with your coming to Berkeley?

Wilson: No, that was a complete, shocking development because my mother, of course, was the daughter of Mormon pioneers and all her relatives were there [Ogden] and the family was as deeply rooted as you can be. But then the little printing firm for which my father worked started a branch, a shop, in Los Angeles. My father was asked to move his family down there for six months to help this branch of the firm get started.

This was during my first semester at Berkeley. I didn't know what was going on, but it was a crisis: could they leave for six months? But my mother was sick and tired [chuckles] of her household duties. The glamour of California evidently moved her and the idea it would be a wonderful change for six months only--she wasn't pulling up and leaving--and so they did. In December of 1926 (see, I had been in Berkeley only since August) they up and moved to Los Angeles, and that was the wrench. I wanted to get back for Christmas and see my friends. I never did. I went to Los Angeles instead and met complete strangers down there. The family is still in Los Angeles. The six months resulted in what? Fifty-four years now--1926 to 1980. It must be fifty-four years.

Riess: I take it then he had more of a success?

Wilson: For a while the plant prospered, but when the crash came and the Depression descended, then things were very bad. My eldest sister and myself had to contribute to the family's support. Most Depression families went through similar circumstances.

But it was wonderfully glamorous too to go to Los Angeles. We didn't have to find entertainment. Just to drive around the streets and to drive to the beach and to drive to Pasadena and see the palm trees and drive out to the Port of Los Angeles and walk on the breakwater, these were things that we never dreamed of doing. So the family stayed there and eventually my sister--she was graduated from the University of Utah at the end of my freshman year at Cal; she's three years older than I am--got a teaching credential, taught in Ogden for a year or two, and then got a job in southern California teaching. She was the mainstay of the family during the bad years.

Riess: The access to Ogden was really cut off, or did you systematically go back to see the relatives?

Wilson: No, I didn't get to go back until I was a junior. At the end of the junior year I got to go back for a visit there and [sighs] I remember being nostalgic and so on.

A curious thing is that since we in a sense left abruptly, feeling that we were going to go back and that that's where our roots were, and never did, there was always in all my three sisters and myself a feeling of incompleteness. I used to dream about going back to Ogden and walking along the streets and wondering what they looked like now, and so did my sister Helen. My younger sisters [did] less because they remembered less about it, but we all were haunted by ghosts of the past.

So in 1975 in the summer--yes, 1975--we all said, "Let's go back to Ogden and walk the streets and see if the ghosts can be laid and see what our reaction will be." So they left their husbands--"We don't want you along, husbands, you're not part of this"--and we flew into Salt Lake City, rented a car. We first drove around in Salt Lake where Helen had gone to the University of Utah, to the home where my aunt and uncle had lived, a beautiful house. We went where my other aunt had lived. Then we drove the old route (there's now a freeway between Salt Lake and Ogden), a little old highway which wound through the country towns, we drove through them, and stopped. I remember the towns--Bountiful, that's one that sticks in my mind. Then when you get close to Ogden there's Riverdale.

We came down the hill into the city of Ogden and we went that first afternoon to the house where my sister Margaret had been born. We took pictures of it. It's still there. We drove to the house where my sister Janice had been born, and took pictures of it. I must say they looked in pretty good shape. Then we drove to where I was born, the row of houses on 27th Street which my grandfather had built. Some of them were in pretty good shape. One of them has now tumbled down, a broken-down car in the front yard, the grass all dried up, the windows broken and stuffed with cloth, and two or three black people sitting on the sagging porch giving a perfect imitation of Tobacco Road. Now, that doesn't mean that that's typical of all the blacks in the town, but that's what happened to that house.

We registered at Ramada Inn, which now looks east toward the mountains. Ogden nestles at the foot of the Wasatch Range and the easterners are tricked by the illusion. They have a half an hour between trains and they think they can walk to the mountains. They look so close. [chuckles] They discover that they're a long ways away. But you're nestled right at the foot and now the town is built up along the foothills. Then to the north there is this gorge, a river, running through Ogden Canyon. It's a small canyon,

Wilson: but it's beautifully rocky and scenic. That's where my great-uncle's hotel was, the Hermitage Hotel. It is no longer there; it burned down. But anyway, the girls and I just surfeited ourselves with nostalgia, with memories, with walking, with picture-taking. The reason we chose the Ramada Inn was because they've got rooms looking directly to the hills and you could keep your curtains, your drapes, open all the time and see those beautiful mountains.

We were there, I guess, in June, in springtime, because the town looked greener, more verdant, than we ever remembered it. It's now old enough so the older places, the houses that are a hundred years old or more, pioneer architecture now, are being valued and they are being maintained beautifully. We walked the streets. My old high school is now a junior high school and there is a new high school up in the foothills. But we walked into the hallways there. The junior high school where my sister taught is no longer there. The Ramada Inn stands where Weber College used to stand where she went to junior college.

A lot of things [are] gone, but there are a lot of things that are still as we remembered them. But they didn't disappoint us. They looked better than we expected them to look, and the town looked more prosperous than we expected it to look. The vegetation was so lush, the mountains were so close and so green, that we got quite a lift.

We spent only three days there and we flew back and we've been perfectly contented and happy since then. It did lay the ghosts and we did have the memories revived and satisfied, and I haven't had that dream I used to have every little while of walking the streets and trying to find this place and trying to find that place--I guess an indication that you ought to go back. I was back since then for the 50th reunion of my high school graduating class. I guess that was the next year. The town no longer had the appeal. But we all needed to go back and satisfy our memories.

Riess: That's interesting that you all felt it.

Wilson: We all felt it and all feel satisfied now that we don't have the urge to rewalk the streets and go into rooms which we once knew. It's now in the past and passed us over. I have happy memories and I do give credit to the Ogden school system for a good, sound education because when I came to Cal I was not handicapped. I made A's as a freshman at Cal and I think that's always an indication, both of the preparation you've had and of the good study habits you've been taught. So did Helen Grace, the other Thompson scholar here. She made a very good career in college.

- Riess: When you talked about the rich families like the Eccles family, were there those who went off to Yale and Harvard and places like that?
- Wilson: Yes, I remember one of the daughters went to Michigan, to Ann Arbor, and that sounded very glamorous. But I was very naïve about universities and colleges. We knew the University of Utah. We knew the Agricultural College in Logan. But I had a very dim idea about what universities were all about, what were the leading institutions. Sure, you heard of Harvard and Yale and we had heard of West Point because every now and then an Ogden boy got an appointment to West Point, but I was really very naïve, very unworldly, not having been outside the state.

II UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA STUDENT YEARS

Willard Dawson Thompson Scholarship

Wilson: Reva Beck was one of the very influential people in my high school career. The other was my English teacher named Florence Newcomb. She was a Phi Beta Kappa from the University of Nebraska. I didn't know what Phi Beta Kappa was, but it was Reva Beck who said, "My lord, do you realize that Mrs. Newcomb is a Phi Beta Kappa?" I said, "What's that?" "Why, my dear," she said, "that is the top honor that any scholar, any student can achieve, Phi Beta Kappa."

Florence Newcomb was a large, motherly woman, and a good, good English teacher. She taught you to write, taught you to enjoy literature. But her influence on my life came about because she was the one who knew about the Willard Dawson Thompson Memorial Scholarship for students from Utah to come to the University of California at Berkeley. She always had this in the back of her mind and when any student came along who she thought could win the scholarship (was qualified for the scholarship), then she would gently but firmly urge them to apply. In my high school class there was myself and one other, a girl named Helen Grace. Mrs. Newcomb urged us to apply. She wrote for the applications. She helped us fill them out and we both received the scholarship.

That has certainly changed my life more profoundly than anything did. When I got the news that the scholarship had been awarded to me, I was in the heavy stage of applying for an appointment to West Point! [laughter] That was also a huge honor and the senator from Utah was Reed Smoot. I wrote to him and to the congressmen and there weren't any openings. So I accepted the scholarship to come to Cal. I came to Cal, arriving in August of 1926. In December of 1926 I received a letter from Senator Smoot saying, "Are you still interested in the appointment to West Point? There is a vacancy open now and I would be happy to consider you." But after one semester at Cal, there was no way I was going to change and go to West Point.

Riess: Had you traveled much?

Wilson: I had never been outside the state, and I had assumed that when I was graduated from high school, if I were lucky I would go the route of the University of Utah, and escape going to Weber College for a year, which was looked down upon by most local people. I had relatives living in Salt Lake City. My sister, during her three years there, had lived with an aunt and an uncle who was an attorney and had a big house, and she was allowed to live there. I thought I would just move in there, and along came this scholarship to Cal Berkeley.

Everybody, when it was announced publicly, said, "Oh, how wonderful! But it's so big!" This was back in 1926 and Cal Berkeley was all of eight or nine thousand--"Oh, it's wonderful, but so big. Won't you be lost there?" Well, I tell this story often. Another teacher of mine had graduated from the University of Michigan, which was also a big state institution, and I said to her, "Should I be worried about the size?" "Nonsense!" she said. "The bigger the place, the more opportunities there are, the more friends you'll make, the more exciting it will be. Don't give it a minute's worry or thought." And she was entirely right.

I was so excited when I got to Berkeley as a freshman. Everything was new and thrilling. I wasn't homesick a second. I didn't have time to think about it. By the time the first semester was over and I was established, it was too late to get homesick, so I was never homesick. I always thought Cal was just the most exciting place to have come and I tell prospective students that.

Riess: There was no question in your family's mind that this was the thing to do?

Wilson: Oh, that I would go to college, that's right.

Riess: Ambivalence about your going so far away?

Wilson: [pause] There was worry on my mother's part that the temptations of the big metropolitan area would be dangerous and so on, but she was very happy because I could support myself completely on this scholarship. It was \$600 a year. That gave me \$60 a month for ten months, and you could live on that.

Riess: How about the University of Utah? Were there scholarships or special arrangements for Mormon students?

Wilson: There undoubtedly were, but since I had relatives living there who would give me board and room and with part-time work that I could do, I expected to support myself that way and didn't look into the scholarship business. It was Florence Newcomb who knew about this one.

Wilson: I have since done a little investigating about who Willard Dawson Thompson was. He came from a well-to-do family in Salt Lake City. He, for what reason I don't know, came to Berkeley. He became a big man on the campus. I believe he was president of the senior class. I think he was a member of Zeta Psi fraternity. Then he graduated. He went back to Salt Lake City, joined his father's business, but then died in about nine years.

It was his widow--he had married in the meantime--who then set up these scholarships in his memory for students like him who had graduated from Utah high schools to come to Berkeley, and then I suppose the idea was that they would go back to Utah, which I never did, and so on. But there wasn't any obligation implied or written that you would do that. It was just in memory of this fine, strapping young man who had come here and been so successful and then gone back and died too young. So that's the story of that particular scholarship.

The last summer in Ogden I was an assistant desk clerk at my great-uncle's hotel, not the bellboy, and it was a glamorous summer. Up there in Ogden Canyon they had a famous dance band (famous for the area at that time) and all of those guys lived at the hotel where I worked. We became good friends and they attracted all of the pretty girls, and Utah had some of the prettiest girls. We had a glorious summer because my shift on the desk ended at midnight and the band ended at midnight too, so we could get together. Then I had the glamour of being somebody who was about to go away to college and leave in the middle of the summer.

Berkeley started--the old calendar, you know--in the middle of August and ended early in December. People who remember the old Berkeley calendar remember it with a great deal of nostalgia, and all the students did too. Depending on your finals, you could have three or four weeks vacation at Christmas time. Everything was finished, your finals were over, it was all done, you were completely free over the Christmas vacation. In January you registered for a new semester and that ended in the middle of May. So you got out first and had the jobs and you didn't tell prospective employers that you had to return in the middle of August, but you got the jobs before Stanford boys or anybody else got them. We loved that calendar!

The Fraternity Life

Wilson: So I left my job in Utah in the summer and had going-away parties, and I remember feeling, yes, sad to leave these good friends and these old buddies from high school, but more excited over the prospects of something new.

Wilson: I drove with a friend from Ogden to Berkeley. The leading department store in Ogden at that time was the Wright Brothers Department Store and Ben Wright, one of the sons, had come to Berkeley as a freshman, had transferred to the University of Utah as a sophomore, had missed Berkeley and was coming back to Berkeley as a junior. He learned that I had won the scholarship and was going to Berkeley and invited me to ride with him in the car, and that was wonderfully exciting too.

Riess: Yes, to be introduced by an experienced man.

Wilson: Yes, and from one of the well-to-do families, too. He moved me right into his fraternity. My sister, who by now was in a sorority at the University of Utah, said, "Ben Wright is rushing you." I said, "What's rushing?" "He wants you to join his fraternity." "Oh, no," said I. "This is purely altruistic on his part. We like each other and he needs company."

Well, we were both right because I had written to a previous Thompson scholar who was still here and he was going to find me a place at a rooming house as soon as I landed here and I was going to stay in a hotel for a day or two. Ben said, "Oh, no, stay at my fraternity house until you find a place and it won't cost you anything." That was appealing, so I moved in and never moved out! [laughter]

The big world of Berkeley was thus very exciting and I illustrated the cynical comment which I used to use on my students--"What is 'news?' Anything you tell an undergraduate"--well, that was literally true with me, coming to Berkeley for the first time. Anything you told me was new and absolutely startling and exciting.

Riess: But then you were, I guess, very protected by being moved right into the fraternity house.

Wilson: Well, fraternities in those days were good institutions to develop the social side of you and to supply the things that you lacked. Fraternities no longer have the standards that they once had.

For example, our pledge class had a pledge trainer and the sophomores were our disciplinarians, but the upperclassmen were our friends. We had to put on jackets and ties every night for dinner except on Friday night. The waiters weren't members of the house who just flung the food on the table. They were hired outside students. They wore white coats. They served us as though we were sitting in a restaurant and then removed the plates. The president of our house presided at the head of the table and obscenity or swearing was not allowed. If you slipped, why, you got fined. He had the bank right there. And the tradition and the other upper-classmen were behind him.

Wilson: We were taught how to wear a tuxedo. We were taught how to tie a bow tie. To this day, I will not wear a made-up tie. That seems to me sacrilegious because in those days a fraternity man never wore an already-made tie. That was no class. You learned to tie your own tie. We didn't rent tuxedos. We borrowed them from around the whole fraternity neighborhood. There were enough tuxedos so if the formal dances weren't given all on the same weekend, why, a house could outfit itself. A few people owned them and the rest borrowed them.

They wanted you to develop socially. We'd have exchanges with the sororities and if we had an exchange dance, then the upperclassmen made out your dance card telling you that you could dance so many times with your own date, but then they would say, it would be good if you would dance with So-and-So because she feels shy and she knows this and this and this. They sort of plotted a program, a social program, which would develop you.

Riess: That's fascinating. Didn't it turn you into terrific snobs if you were all such superior fellows?

Wilson: No, at that time there were enough fraternities so that anybody who wanted to join a fraternity could, and they were looking for members. I think that was more or less the case--sororities have always been more exclusive. But fraternities at that time were made up of a great mixture of all classes--working boys, rich boys, poor boys, and so on--and there has always been that tradition.

Now, some of the houses had more well-to-do boys than others, more really rich guys than others, but by and large there was a great democratic tradition on the campus. I never remember feeling that we were snobs or having any reputation of being snobs. If some individual or some group disliked you, why, they would bring that charge, but it simply wasn't true. Anybody who was not a downright animal, if he wanted to join a fraternity, there was room for him.

Riess: It probably provided a kind of finishing school experience for a lot of the farm kids.

Wilson: Oh, yes. Well, people like me--I had never thought of myself as a hick, but I had never gone dinner dancing in the big city or worn a tuxedo or attended a formal dance or did any of those things, and they certainly trained you to do that. They also aimed to strengthen your character, too; that is, they taught you never to get angry--this was in my fraternity--never to get angry in the fraternity house. If you felt anger, there was a way of talking it out, but you never flared up and had a quarrel or had a fight with somebody. If the underclassmen slipped and did that, they were severely disciplined.

Wilson: You never spoke harshly about any of your fraternity brothers. They might be terrible louts or drunkards or something like that, but you protected their reputation. You never, never criticized them outside of the fraternity house.

Inside the fraternity house we used to have once a semester what's called a round table evening where after the evening meal was cleared away (this was announced ahead of time, so you had done your studying ahead of time), each man stood up individually while every other man went around the table getting the criticisms off his mind: "Garff, I wish for god's sake you'd hang up your clothes. You're basically neat, but all of your clothes are piled on that one chair and then I can never get to use the damn chair. Would you please hang up your clothes, Garff?" "Would you please not whistle in the bathroom?" [laughter]

Both minor things that have gotten on your nerves and major things--"You're being a little bit too standoffish. You need to break out of your mold and be more extroverted. We've got to get you some dates. You ought to have some dates, go to some exchanges with this and that."

When it was done right, it was a remarkable experience of seeing yourselves as all of your peers had seen you. Each one saw a little different aspect. Sometimes the problem was you can't say anything nice. But that wasn't the general rule. Some of the guys said, "Your strong point is this and this and you should be proud of that, but remember this." But when developed correctly, the men were perfectly honest and well-meaning too, not giving the criticism with the intention of hurting anybody but with the intention of helping somebody, helping somebody develop. I'm sure no fraternity does that now, have these things, and I grieve. I think a fraternity should be a men's club where you have the highest standards of social conduct, as well as the moments of complete let-down.

On Friday we didn't have to wear a jacket and tie. Friday you could be a little rougher. The last Friday of the term all hell would break loose. You came in your oldest clothes because you would sit down and somebody suddenly would throw a piece of bread across the table at somebody else. Then it often ended as a free-for-all. That was the way you let off steam. It was a very--not protective--but a very supportive atmosphere.

They also encouraged you to go out for activities. Every single freshman was supposed to have some activity, an athletic activity or be a manager or on the Daily Cal here or the Blue and Gold there or the debating team and so on. You had to do something on the campus. At the same time you had to keep your grades up, and after the first cinch notices came out...They don't send cinch notices

Wilson: anymore, but twice in a semester you got delinquency notices sent out by the registrar, that if you were failing in a course you were warned or if your attendance had been less than what was desired you got an attendance censure, an academic censure.

Riess: Was this sent to you or to the fraternity?

Wilson: It was sent to you individually, but copies were sent to the fraternity. Oh, yes. Well, anybody who was in danger in any classes, a study table was organized for them and, of course, the effectiveness of the study table varied according to the effectiveness of the upperclassman who was in charge.

I remember a tough upperclassman, Jim Shaw or Roy Hallsey, who told us, "For this study table you bring all of your books, papers, dictionaries, pens, pencils, whatever you need, because you stay at the study table." Well, nobody thought that that was really what was going to happen, so after about fifteen minutes one guy put up his hand, "I forgot my notebook." "Too bad, study what you've got there." "Can't I go upstairs and get my notebook?" "You stay here until a break is announced. No, you can't leave the room; you can't leave your chair."

The class structure was so organized that when upperclassmen said something, lowerclassmen obeyed, because they had the whole force of campus opinion behind them--senior control in the house and on the campus. Well, the boy just buckled down. "I finished my work. May I leave?" "No. Sit there and read something else, and when it's over I'll tell you." "I don't have anything to do." "All right, you sit there." [laughter] A little arbitrary, but it was making the point that "this is not something that you take lightly, it's something that's well organized and we expect you to concentrate on your studying for these three hours, and you'll get a break in an hour and a half and then come back."

So fraternities in those days were interested in the whole person.

Riess: It had to plug into an upbringing that had the same kind of automatic aspects, it seems to me. Otherwise, how at that point in one's life--for you it made sense, you had always been a good student, you had internalized those same expectations for yourself. But I can imagine for some people it would be unthinkable.

Wilson: Yes, it would be tougher. But within my fraternity these standards had already been firmly established and observed. My fraternity was before 1912 the Calimedico Club. They were all pre-medical students. Then it became a chapter of Pi Kappa Alpha in 1912. By the time I

Wilson: came in 1926, of course, they had been--I don't know how long Calimedico had been in existence--a part of the national fraternity, Pi Kappa Alpha, in existence fourteen years and they had very firmly established their standards. But these weren't unique to Pi Kappa Alpha. They were pretty much the standards all over the campus.

Then the decline and fall of fraternities set in, and what caused it, I don't know, but they are not that kind of a club anymore that had banded together to help each other and to worry about each other academically and socially and athletically and so on, and I think it's too bad. [sighs]

Riess: That sort of experience of mutual self-criticism is really extraordinary and it has to be done lovingly and I guess it was.

Wilson: Yes, and if you wouldn't accept the loving admonition you got [laughter] very--

Riess: Did they actually throw people out of the fraternity?

Wilson: Oh, yes. Pledges could be broken. You had a semester being a pledge and if you didn't measure up, why, you were not allowed to be initiated. Guys would move out either because they didn't like it or because it was suggested that they move out.

But if you couldn't take it, that was considered a real sign of weakness, which you had to correct. The disciplinary measures were enforced. There was a rules committee, of course. After Monday lunches, the chairman of the house rules committee said, "We will see the following freshmen--" That means you had not cleaned your room or done your work right or had done something else wrong, and you were either paddled or tubbed. The paddling was just beating you on the butt with a wooden panel and it was painful. Tubbing was worse than that. That's when they fill the bathtub and cover your nose and mouth and hold you down under the water until you start gasping. They eventually did away with that even in my time.

Riess: When you say that, it occurs to me that after young men had fought in World War II they weren't going to come back and tolerate that.

Wilson: That's right. It was unthinkable. When the veterans got back they were mature people and they played hard, but they studied hard too.

[Interview 3: March 11, 1980]##

Wilson: I owe an enormous lot to the fraternity for the social development it gave me, and when I fell upon evil days financially after the Thompson scholarship ran out, I got a job as house manager and that helped me financially.*

Riess: There wasn't any money coming from home?

Wilson: No, I was entirely on my own. We tried to earn enough to help them too.

But as I said last time, I found Berkeley just enormously stimulating and exciting and so on. [sighs] I still find it that way. It just expanded my horizons, having never been out of the state before.

The Spirit

Wilson: I had heard from Cal alumni before I got here that there was a real spirit on the campus, that students were dedicated to the University of California. They had pride in it and they really loved it, and I experienced that feeling. I like to tell entering freshmen about the three thrills that I received. My first football game. I hadn't been told that we had a band. They burst out of the north tunnel with that great fanfare and marched onto the field. I suddenly heard a noise--the music, I mean. Everybody stood up and on came the band. I had one of those thrills where the shivers go up and down your spine.

I had a similar thrill the first time I was at a university meeting, which we had then, and at the end everybody stood and sang, "All Hail, Blue and Gold." I had never been told about that either, and that was another of the spine-tingling moments I remember.

*Wilson also received a Joseph Bonnheim scholarship (1928-29), an Isaias W. Hellman scholarship (1929-30), and a Carrie M. Jones scholarship (spring 1931). S.R.

Wilson: The third one was in the spring when the Cal crew was rowing Washington down on the Oakland estuary. My fraternity had a houseboat moored at the finish line. (We could do it in those days. You can't do it now, I think, you have to stand on solid ground.) It was a grey, foggy, cold morning on the estuary. The boys kept themselves warm with some home brew, though this was Prohibition and it was illegal. Several of them managed to fall off into the estuary and had to be fished out!

They ran the freshman race. They ran the junior varsity race. I don't remember them at all. But then we heard the cannon down at the starting line boom, and the three-mile race started. We strained our eyes down the estuary. Finally we could make out two tiny dots. We knew these were the two shells, Washington and California. The dots got a little larger and a little larger. We couldn't distinguish colors, but pretty soon we saw that one dot was quite a ways ahead of the other dot; which was it, California or Washington? They got a little closer and just at the right theatrical moment, the sun broke through the clouds, casting a great floodlight down on the leading boat, and we saw the rowers wore blue and gold. Oh, that was a real thrilling moment!

The Professors

Wilson: I actually came to Cal with the idea of being a pre-legal student and going into law. But after my freshman year my sister, to whom I owe many of my literary interests and passions, said, "Look, you should take an English course," because I took public speaking LAB--not English LAB--to satisfy that requirement after passing the Subject A exam. She said, "You ought to take an English course." I said, "Why?" "Because you enjoy reading. This will open up a great many new fields and authors and ideas to you."

So I enrolled in a survey course of English literature. I think it was called 56AB then. That was the thing that changed me from law into English. I found it just delightful.

Riess: Who taught that?

Wilson: It was taught by specialists in various fields. For example, Willard "Bull" Durham started out by giving lectures on Chaucer. He was a vastly amusing man and began by saying that "most of the Canterbury tales I will allow you to read, but there are three very, very naughty ones that are not considered fit for young minds and so you must not read these three"--and he named them. Then when the first exam came it was mostly on those and everybody knew the answers. [laughter]

Wilson: I remember Professor [George] Potter lectured on Shakespeare and we all thought that Shakespeare had just driven him a little dotty because his enthusiasm, his adoration, was so great we thought nobody could be that good. It takes a little maturity to realize that he was right.

So right on through we had some wonderfully stimulating people giving you, age by age, the cream of English literature, and after the end of my sophomore year, when it came time to declare a major, I decided I would go into the English department.

Riess: One of the great names in that department was Walter Morris Hart.

Wilson: Sure, I had a course from Walter Morris Hart after he retired from administration. He was the vice-president and dean of the university when I was first here. Then when Robert Gordon Sproul became president, Walter Morris Hart retired to teaching. One of the first courses he gave was a course in great books, beginning with the Iliad and the Odyssey and going down. This was new in the English department. I guess I was a first-year graduate student then when I took him.

Let me pause here and explain something: I entered as a freshman in August of 1926 and my class should have been the class of 1930. But in the spring of 1930 I was selected to be Cal's representative on this international debate team and so I took a leave of absence for that spring semester and for the fall semester because I stayed in Europe, and then resumed in January of 1931. So I was here five years really as an undergraduate, but gone for a year, most of the time in Europe, then came back for a term, and was graduated in '31.

Then I was here for two years as a teaching assistant while getting a master's degree. We called them teaching fellows then, and you could only take a restricted program if you were a teaching fellow, so it was impossible to get an M.A. in one year, you automatically had to take two.

I'm still kind of bothered by the fact that I straddled two classes. This year the class of 1931 has formed a committee for the class gift and the president of the class wrote me and asked me to be on the committee. I wrote back and said, "I'd like to do anything possible, but I don't think the members of the class count me or think of me as one of them. They think of me as belonging to the class of 1930. Wouldn't it be better--" He wrote back and said, "Oh, no, no, the class claims you, recognizes your name because you were around so long, and also, remember, you were our commencement speaker." That was a strange thing, having gone through three and a half years with the class of '30, one semester with the class of '31, and I was the commencement speaker. Somebody must have made a mistake then!

Wilson: But I had a chance to sample a lot of the fine people in the English department. Walter Morris Hart was one and his was an inspiring class in great books.

Riess: That concept of great books was something that he had originated?

Wilson: Yes. It had not been in the departmental offerings until he returned to teaching and asked to teach that. Since he was such an important and powerful man, why, naturally he got his wish. Another teacher I remember vividly was Benjamin Kurtz. He taught an upper division course, the theory of poetry. I believe it was English 153AB. One semester of that was devoted exclusively to the Poetics of Aristotle, reading the Poetics in the Butcher translation, then reading the Butcher essays, and then reading a whole slew of classical Greek plays to try to see how they generated these observations of Aristotle, how they were drawn from the plays which Aristotle knew. That thorough grounding in the Poetics of Aristotle has served me better than any critical course I ever had. I think if you want to understand drama, particularly tragedy, you've got to understand Aristotle, not superficially but thoroughly.

I had George Stewart as a graduate student. George Stewart is a novelist and a writer who is still alive. He's about eighty-five years old now. He taught many things. He was a very versatile man. But the course I had from him as a graduate student was rapid reading of Middle English texts! [laughter] You'd never suspect George Stewart of doing that!

Another was Willard Farnham and I had several courses from him. Of course, I got a good dose of Aristotle, followed with a course in the theory of tragedy. Willard Farnham has written extensively on that. Then he had a seminar in non-Shakespearean Elizabethan tragedy. He was a young professor then. In retrospect, he may have been five or six years older than I was, but he seemed to be enormously mature to me. But his courses--or his first course--baffled me because he didn't announce a plan at the beginning of how everything was going to apply. He would introduce this idea and this reading and then go on to something else and for a while you were baffled until you got toward the end of the course and you saw how everything fit in. It had been beautifully thought out ahead of time. All of Farnham's courses were characterized by that.

Another English professor I remember so well was J.S.P. Tatlock, who had come to Berkeley from Harvard where he had been chairman of the department, and he was the authority in the United States on Chaucer. I had a graduate seminar from him on Chaucer and my experience there was a little lesson that moral dishonesty does not pay. His seminar was limited to maybe fifteen people and he was very careful about those he took. He had many, many applicants and he took about fifteen of them.

Wilson: An older hand said, "One thing he likes is people who are adept at languages. If you even know one phrase in a language, put it down and you'll get in, and then it will be forgotten. You'll never have to use it." So I put down French and German and Latin. I had taken three years of Latin in high school, and one year in college, though four or five years had gone by and I hadn't been reading Latin.

Well, he admitted me to the seminar. Then right around the first of the term he said, "We must now assign term projects for you to work on. We're going to spend most of the course listening to reports which you've done." He had a lot of topics he wanted investigated. One included earlier parallels to "The Monk's Tale" of Chaucer, or Chaucer's concept of tragic drama. He said, "Now, this requires somebody who can read Latin and who's interested in drama. Let's see"--going through the cards--"ah, there's Wilson. Just the man! He knows Latin and he's interested in dramatic literature. You will have that." So I was stuck and I had to plow through medieval Latin texts.

I did a little of it myself. I pawned it out to my good friends who were Latin majors. Together with them I got through the reading, got the paper done, and got an "A" in the course. But I told those who came after me, "Don't ever make the mistake of listing a language that you're not fluent in!"

Riess: How about Chauncey Wells?

Wilson: I remember him as one of the most cultivated, courtly men we had--so gentle, so courteous. When you had a midterm and the examinations were corrected, he returned them individually to you with kind of a bow; one by one he handed you your midterm. He will come up later in my discussion of the English Club because he was the one who gave the definitive answer to the question, "What is the purpose of the English Club?" As Chauncey Wells said, "The redemption of leisure is the sole purpose of the English Club."

Riess: And Robert Utter?

Wilson: I've heard him speak on the art of the essay and I remember him saying that his early efforts--he would send essays to the Atlantic Monthly and various magazines and they would come back so fast he would have thought they were on a rubber band! [laughter] But later he became a well-known essayist.

Riess: Arthur Brodeur?

Wilson: Oh, yes. Again, I didn't have a class from him. He was the expert in Old English and taught Beowulf and so on. He was a jolly man with a beard, very impressive looking. But as a teacher, I don't know. I just saw him in informal contacts and in informal groups.

Of course, I got to know a lot of these men in Phi Beta Kappa. When I was the student president of Phi Beta Kappa, we had biweekly lunches and invited all kinds of faculty members and visiting firemen to come and talk to us, and that's where I got to know quite a few of them.

I actually knew Charles Mills Gayley slightly. He had retired before I came here to the university. But since I lived at the Pi K.A. house on one corner of Piedmont and Durant, and his house was across the street on the other corner of Piedmont and Durant, one vivid memory is this handsome, courtly man taking his evening walk. Every evening he would emerge with a pearl grey homburg on his head, a cane in one hand, and a leash in the other hand to which were attached two little Scottish terriers. He would walk up Piedmont Avenue. When he'd meet a lady, no matter what her age, he would shift the cane to the hand with the dogs so he'd have his right hand free and take off his hat and bow to the lady. He would meet men, and he'd stop and chat with them and so on. Once a semester the fraternity to which I belonged would invite him for dinner. So he'd come over and he was a wonderful storyteller. We put on our best suits and ties and were enthralled with Gayley's utterings.

When I was a senior I was a candidate for the Rhodes Scholarship, which I didn't get. Pat O'Brien, the assistant dean of men at the time, thought I should get a letter of recommendation from Charles Mills Gayley and asked, "Do you know him?" I said, "I've met him through the fraternity connection." "I must take you up and introduce you so you can get acquainted so he can write you a good recommendation." I visited Gayley two or three evenings and he got to know me and then wrote a recommendation, which I never saw. I don't blame him for the fact that I failed to get the scholarship. No Berkeley person got the scholarship that year.

Riess: Did you get to know Gayley in those two or three meetings?

Wilson: Yes, and he had gusto. He had a vast knowledge and wisdom. He had a courtly style just as Chauncey Wells had. Most of them had at that time. I value that as a great memory because he was the only link with what was one of the golden ages that we remember-- a link to Benjamin Ide Wheeler, who died before I got here, and to Henry Morse Stephens, who also was dead before I got here. He was probably the most beloved professor ever on this campus. The students evidently adored him.

- Wilson: He [Stephens] was one of the pillars of the Order of the Golden Bear, which is still a very active organization. But it was Charles Mills Gayley who wrote one of the Cal songs that used to be popular, "Oh Have You Seen Our Heaven's Blue?" It was an old tune and Gayley wrote the words. Gayley and Henry Morse Stephens were the founders of many of the traditions on campus. They organized the Winged Helmet, which is no longer in existence, and although Benjamin Ide Wheeler is credited with being the founder of the Golden Bear back in 1900, it was Gayley and Stephens who really lent their continued support and guidance until it became the most prestigious organization on the campus at the time.
- Riess: Were these men westerners themselves or were they bringing something from the East?
- Wilson: No, Gayley came from Michigan. Morse Stephens came from Cornell, as had President Wheeler. President Wheeler was a professor of philology or classical literature, and came from Cornell, where he had made a great enough reputation to be made president of the University of California in 1899. He brought with him, I believe, a great many Cornell traditions and adapted Berkeley traditions to them, and he brought some key people.

My Latin teacher in my freshman year, Clifton Price, also came from Cornell. I'd completely forgotten that, if I ever knew it, until one of my years at Cornell. They always have their alumni reunions at commencement time there, and classes come back by the score. We had a commencement play, and since many of the undergraduates were already gone, the graduate students were put in the parts. After the performance I was in the dressing room and somebody came up and said, "Garff, there is an old gentleman down on the stage asking to see you."

I said, "Who? Who could it be?" He said, "He's wearing a 50th reunion badge and I couldn't get his name, but he's asking for Garff Wilson." I said, "Impossible! I don't know anybody who graduated from Cornell fifty years ago!" "Well, damn it, your name is Garff Wilson, isn't it?" [taps for emphasis] "That's the name he wants." I said, "Okay."

So I quickly put on some clothes and rushed down on the stage and here was my dear old Latin professor, Clifton Price, with his white beard. He was kind of hunched over, and I was completely flabbergasted, not only to see him at Cornell, but by the fact that he recognized my name from the year 1926 or '27! I saw him after that because we became kind of good friends. He always lamented the fact that I didn't go on and take more Latin. And I kind of am sorry too.

Riess: [laughter] As an earlier story proves!

Wilson: But I think there were lots of ideas, traditions, points of view, brought to the Berkeley campus from the founders right on, because if I read history right, most of the founders of the college of California were Yale men and Yale considers the University of California as one of its children, one of its progeny.

But then we had this strong influence from Cornell. When I say "traditions"--I got back to Cornell and discovered that they have a bell tower where they play bells three times a day (the old library tower)! Well, it seems to me very logical that when Mrs. Jane K. Sather asked President Wheeler what she could build for the campus, he, remembering the Cornell bells, would say, "Let's have a bell tower." Bob Sibley in his book California Pilgrimage has a very romantic tale about the origin of the Campanile which I won't go into. But whatever the thing was, after Wheeler came here to Berkeley we got a bell tower and followed the same tradition of playing it three times a day and on Sunday afternoons.

Riess: So there was an idea of what a great university should have and look like and sound like.

Wilson: That's right, and from the more conservative institutions in the East we got our feeling of having to be very solidly academic. That occurs in the history of the department of public speaking. Few departments in the U.S.A. kept that title as long as Cornell did and Cal did because at Cornell, when I was there in '38, '39, and '40, it was still called the department of public speaking and yet it taught all drama, all theater, everything--very slow in changing.

Riess: I have several more names. Thomas Sanford apparently taught drama.

Wilson: Yes, he did. He gave a survey of the whole sweep of English drama from the miracle and mystery plays to 1900. At that time, the English department didn't recognize that there had been much literature worth studying after 1900. So it got up to there. He was kind of an austere man. He lectured in Room 11 Wheeler Hall and he covered a tremendous amount of material. We had to keep reading and keep absorbing in order to keep up with him and be ready for the midterms and finals and so on. But it was a very thorough survey.

Riess: Ben Lehman--did you have any classes with him?

Wilson: I knew him as a friend, but I never had Ben Lehman as an instructor. After I came back on the faculty we became quite good friends. He was the first chairman of the dramatic art department.

Theatrical Presentations: Skull and Keys

Wilson: It was curious. When I came to Berkeley as a faculty member, Monroe Deutsch asked me, "Now, which department would you prefer to teach in? In our new dramatic art department or in the department of public speaking?" I knew that Gerry Marsh, then chairman of the public speaking department, had been the man who asked for me, and I felt I should be loyal and say public speaking. Actually, for the skills I had developed at that time, I should have been in dramatic art. I had been trained as a director of plays and a teacher of acting and things like that at Cornell, and I was bursting with that. Yet my loyalty put me in the then public speaking department, which became the speech department.

But I got to teach oral interpretation of drama and I got to teach reader's theater, and then, in the dramatic art department, I got to teach the history of the American theater and studies in American theater. So I've pretty much bridged the fields that most interested me.

However, my skills as a director of plays were never utilized except in the smallest possible way. My first year here in the fall of '41 and the spring of '42, Skull and Keys asked me to direct their spring play. Skull and Keys was a once glorious organization, but it's gone to seed. It sort of paralleled the Triangle Club at Princeton, for instance. They were a bunch of good fellows who would like to drink and enjoy conviviality, but they also every spring gave a play. Originally, I think, it was written by one of the members. It was a great event. It was a formal evening. The men wore tuxedos or white ties, the women long dresses. It was a great honor to be invited and they had a dinner before and then the members presented the play.

I certainly was not a member while I was here [laughter]--a Phi Beta and debater weren't good qualifications for Skull and Keys at that time! I'm now an honorary member. But when I got back to Cal they asked me to direct a spring play. I discovered that now they just used an old melodrama and they prepared it very sketchily and the fun of the evening was to get drunk during the play and fall down on the stage and so on. Well, I'm still a Puritan at heart and I thought we must revive the tradition subtly.

Wilson: So they decided they wanted to do the popular melodrama, The Drunkard. Everybody has done that, but they had never produced it, and they thought it would be hilarious to do The Drunkard. So I said, "Fine." We got copies of the play and I started out the rehearsals weeks ahead of time. They said, "Oh, we don't need to do this much." I said, "Well, you ought to get familiar with the play."

My strategy was to rehearse them so long that they actually knew their parts very well, well enough to enjoy the parts, to improvise the parts because it was to be a farce. There is a child in it, Little Mary, and a football player named Gene Pickett played that part. He was about as wide as a Mack truck and had great, hairy legs and he wore this little dress that came to his knees and a blonde wig as Little Mary.

The strategy worked. The guys pretty soon got into enjoying the play because they knew it and weren't fumbling for lines, and they started improvising business and different readings and all kinds of tricks and things. When it came time to do the play they had a meeting. Usually a case of whiskey and a case of beer were delivered to the cast at the beginning of the play as a token of appreciation for their hard work. The members themselves got together and said, "Let's not crack open anything until after the third act." (It was a five-act play.) They said, "This is too much fun. We don't want to ruin this play." Oh, it was a tremendous success and after the third act they started to drink a little bit, but by that time they couldn't get drunk enough to spoil the play. The curtain calls were rousing. The audience gave them a standing ovation and so on, and this was a tremendous success.

Riess: Did it go on to be followed by more of the same or was that your one and only?

Wilson: No, there was another one. That was in the spring of 1942. In the summer I was drafted. I was away in the Army until '46, but when I got back in '46 Skull and Keys got back too and I directed the play. (Was it '46 or '47? I don't know whether I got back in time to direct it. I think I did direct the '46 play.) That was another melodrama and we used much the same strategy. But after that, I dropped out of directing plays for them.

Riess: Is it Hasty Pudding at Harvard that does the same thing?

Wilson: Yes, Hasty Pudding. It's a good eastern tradition, but it's completely disappeared now. I'm sure the present Skull and Keys boys, who are always in trouble, have even forgotten that there was once a play given in the spring.

Riess: As a theater historian, how do you account for the fact that everybody was so keen on doing dramatics in those days?

Wilson: Some years ago I was asked to speak to the interfraternity council on what has happened to Cal traditions. Why had they all died out? Well, I went back to the old Blue and Gold around the turn of the century. One thing I discovered was that it was a completely homogeneous student body. There was not a single black face listed. There may have been one Oriental face. [taps for emphasis] All middle-class white men and women.

Then in 1900 there were no automobiles. There was no radio. There was no television. The movies were just coming in then. You got to the campus by taking a steam train from Oakland into Berkeley and once you were here you were stuck. There were no other diversions except those you created yourself, and you couldn't just get in a car and go to San Francisco. That was a major trip.

So out of sheer exuberance and the need to fill in your time, all of these traditions and all of these pastimes were created, I'm convinced, and the more the better because it kept students out of mischief.

One of the things President Wheeler is reported to have said when he first came to the university was that he couldn't think of a place where there was so much loose energy lying around and not being used and that was one of the reasons he helped to found the Order of the Golden Bear. You can study just so many hours per day and then you've got to do something else, so they formed every sort of club, organization, activity, project, play. Everybody did everything at that time.

Also, we're still in the era when spoken drama was the main source of drama. The movies hadn't killed the living drama by that time, and when you thought of dramatic presentation of any kind you thought of a stage play or vaudeville or circus and so on. We had the Big C Sirkus in those days too, every four years, and that was really a circus where they rented a huge tent and put it up on that field there, Hearst Field, and all of the organizations had side-shows and games and sports and they had a parade, a circus parade, in the afternoon. The prevalence of so much dramatic activity is because it was what people were used to. And they had all of this energy.

The junior farce and the senior extravaganza were original plays. The material came from members of the class. The contest was announced and many, many plays were submitted, and then the jury of faculty members chose the best entry, and that was a great honor

- Wilson: to have your play chosen. So there were a lot of people writing plays and extravaganzas and various acts, and the Partheneia in Faculty Glade was also an original dance drama that some of the girls dreamed up.
- Riess: It's an amazing amount of talent.
- Wilson: Yes, and it's a pity that the present generation of students (and I'm sure they are greatly talented too) has no real motivation. Their entertainment is all provided from the outside. They're all spectators now, not creators or participants themselves. In the days without television and movies and automobiles and everything else, they had to create their own entertainment, their own recreation, and they did it. It's a pity that that has disappeared and they just sit and stare. [laughter]
- Riess: People today would say they don't have time.
- Wilson: Yes, well, students who are not just sitting and staring are socially conscious students, are out doing community projects now. That's one of the things which the older generation of students didn't do, go out and be teacher's aides and go to San Quentin Prison and help them out and be paralegal counselors. A few years ago I checked on them and there are about six thousand of our undergraduate students involved in some kind of community work.

Debating, American Style

- Riess: The pre-law studies--when you were in them were you really drawn to it or did that never really amount to anything?
- Wilson: No, it didn't attract me. During that freshman year when I took the basic courses which filled the requirements of the College of Letters and Science, I got nothing which dealt directly with pre-law. So after I got seduced by this English course I didn't even bother to investigate it. I was committed.
- Riess: At the same time you must have been seduced by somebody who recognized your debating qualities.
- Wilson: Yes, I'm glad you bring that up because I tried out for the freshman debating team the minute the trials were open and was chosen and became president of the freshman debating society. Then the Senate debating society had tryouts for membership and I was one of the four who was elected to membership in their freshman year.

Wilson: It's hard for the present generation of students to imagine how important debating was more than fifty years ago. You have to look in the old Blue and Golds to see the number of pages devoted to debating. As an indication of the interest, there were five organized debating societies on the campus, three men's groups and two women's groups. (Men and women didn't belong to the same organizations in those days. The women didn't want it! [laughter] They wanted their own. They didn't want to be bossed around by the men.) The men's organizations--and this should be recorded--[were] the Senate, Congress, and the youngest group, Centuriata. The women's were Parliament and Philorthian.

Riess: What is the origin of this?

Wilson: They're all classical words that had some connection with forensics, with oratory, with argumentation and so on.

Each group had a goodly membership and there were always a lot of applicants for membership. After you tried out, you were elected or you were not elected and then each organization sent two members to a forensics council. The forensics council elected a president who was really called a commissioner, I think, and a manager, a manager for both men and for women. But the president of the council then automatically had a seat on the executive committee of the ASUC and so this was a prized position.

In those days the representation on the executive committee (now called the senate) all came from activity groups. There was an athletic council which had a representative, a publications council, a dramatic arts council, a debate council, and all sent their representatives on the executive committee. In addition, there were two representatives-at-large and then there were the ASUC officers. It was a smaller group. There was a faculty representative and there was an alumni representative and there was the graduate manager and so on.

Riess: A kind of piling up of responsibilities happens.

Wilson: [laughter] One thing leads to another, but since there could only be one president of the debate council, why, the rest of the members didn't have that same responsibility of attending meetings.

Well, that was one indication of the importance and popularity of debating. Another is the audience which used to attend debates, particularly when we had an international debate, when we had a team from Oxford or Cambridge or Australia and so on. They could fill whatever auditorium was available and charge money for it. People would come and pay 50¢ a head to hear California versus Cambridge.

Wilson: I remember that because I was in that debate as a sophomore. This was old Harmon Gymnasium, the only big auditorium we had. We had a little running track around the balcony, around the whole thing. Every seat was crammed. Debating was a money-making activity.

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Wilson: In the 19th century there was a great tradition in debating in the U.S.A. Every college and university had a team and there were great leagues and there were national questions chosen to debate on and so on. But in the beginning of the 20th century debating had succumbed to the passion that now afflicts our athletics--the passion to win at any cost. Instead of being a gentleman's discussion--sharp, keen as it can be--on issues in hopes of bringing out the truth of the problem, it became a contest to win no matter how. Most American debates were judged by three or four or five experts who sat and tallied and then announced who had won the contest.

Well, there was a restlessness about this and I think the Berkeley campus was in the forefront of this restlessness, this feeling that debating had kind of gone to seed. It should be not a contest where you use any tactics at all to win, but it should become a very penetrating discussion of issues in which you would admit that your opponent was right in this or that or the other. (In old-fashioned debating you'd never admit that your opponent was right on anything. He was made to look ignorant or inaccurate or a downright scoundrel if you could make him look that.)

Riess: Are you saying that that was the old-fashioned style?

Wilson: That was the old-fashioned style, but it was starting to change by the time I got to Berkeley and I think one of the great influences was the Oxford University team, the first international team which came to the United States, I believe in 1924. These were three mature students. They all had degrees from Oxford. One was the son of Ramsey MacDonald, the prime minister. Everybody remembers he was on the first team. They were received with such great acclaim that even the English were astonished at their popularity. I was in high school in Ogden at the time and this was so important an occasion that our high school debate team was driven to Salt Lake City. The debate there was held in the Mormon Tabernacle, the only place big enough to hold the crowd.

The Oxonians introduced the relaxed style of debating in which they would rather say something witty, make a pun and a joke, than fling any statistics at you or any really serious argumentation. The English debating at its best was wonderfully entertaining, but under that entertainment were real nuggets of wisdom and the real issues were present. English debating at its worst was nothing but a lot of witticisms and nothing substantial was said. However, the

Wilson: first Oxford team appealed to Americans as being not only marvelously witty, but very profound in what they had to say and what the wit conveyed. Of course, American audiences--especially in the West--were just delighted with the Oxonian accent.

I think that was a real factor in accelerating the move away from the old-fashioned American style of debating because when I got here to Cal in the fall of '26, decision debating had been done away with. You had either an audience's decision or none at all, and that was to emphasize that it was supposed to be an intelligent discussion on an issue in which there was give and take, and an attempt to arrive at the truth of the matter.

Riess: Did the audience decide by applause?

Wilson: Later on, an audience ballot was actually passed out. But when I debated at the Oxford Union and the Cambridge Union in the spring of 1932, they were all set up that way. They imitate the House of Commons, and the members of the Oxford Union or the Cambridge Union, when they leave the debate, go through one of two doors, one marked "aye," one marked "nay." The first speaker proposes the motion: "I move that this house disapproves of modern women," let's say. Then there's a first opposer, and then a seconder for the proposer, and then a second opposer, a six-man team, and then a second man to defend the proposition and a second man to defend the opposer of the motion. Then the audience gets up and they're tallied as they leave the room. At Aberystwyth in Wales there was actually a division of the house. You moved from one side to the other. The proposer of the motion was on one side of the house (the government side), the way it is in the House of Commons, and then there's the opposition side.

By the time I got here, debating at Berkeley had done away with all decisions except the Joffe debate, which was an individual contest, like an oratorical contest in which one man won. But we had no decisions and we patterned our debating after the English style, to try to be as entertaining as possible and yet say something important. By then we drew large audiences and got coverage in all the newspapers. In that scrapbook you can see that the Daily Californian, which wouldn't bother today to announce a debate, let alone send reporters there and cover it in depth, reported what each speaker said, and tried to put down the witty remarks that had been made and so on.

Riess: What style of debate would you say that William Buckley exemplifies?

Wilson: Well, kind of the American style really, but since he's got a good mind and a quick tongue, he makes it much more entertaining. That's not saying that American debaters didn't always have that, some of them. But the deadly earnestness of the early debates I think has pretty much vanished.

So I plunged into debating as a freshman and continued it through the whole of my undergraduate career and even afterward. I was in the Senate debating society, I had been a member of the council, I had been president of the council, and the culmination was being chosen in 1930 to represent the University of California on this international team which went to England and debated fifteen times there at fifteen different institutions, and the audience voted in our favor thirteen out of the fifteen times. That may have been English hospitality! [laughter]

The two debates that the audience voted against us were these, and why they did is perfectly obvious. At Oxford we proposed the proposition that "one could live happier in America than in England" [chuckles] and we expected to convince the Oxonian audience that this was true. We didn't convince them that this was true. And the University of Birmingham as I recall (this was in the spring of 1930 and the stock market crash had occurred in October of '29 and nobody yet sensed what was going to happen) we proposed that "this house believes that the American doctrine of prosperity is sound." We lost that! [laughter]

But at Cambridge, for example, I remember that debate. This was one of our standard topics, that "this house deplores cynicism in modern thought and literature." We proposed that question and Cambridge unionists voted for us.

Riess: It seems to me that the issues that were involved would give rise to jokes and wit and everything. I mean they're not to be considered serious, are they?

Wilson: That's right, that's right. In that sophomore year, the Cambridge team proposed that "this house disapproves of modern women," for example, and I think that the Australian team had proposed that "this house believes the motion picture to be the enemy of civilization," or something like that. Well, they were purposely framed to be entertaining subjects, to lend themselves to wit and humor.

Riess: Was that part of a kind of decline also?

Wilson: No, it was, it seems to me, not a decline but a loosening of the old rigid formulas, the quest for having more fun, and the quest for being able to discuss important issues in a light manner,

Wilson: because sooner or later we came back to important issues, but we tried to discuss them in an entertaining way and not be so deadly serious and solemn and worked up about winning the votes of three judges sitting out there.

Riess: How much of it is ad lib and thinking on your feet?

Wilson: Well, a good deal of it, although we always had a debate coach, our adviser, and we had to go over our material and practice it. But after the first speaker, then the second speaker had something to reply to even before the formal rebuttals came. Your skill in improvising and answering an argument and speaking without a text was being tested after the first speaker.

Riess: Can you take notes?

Wilson: Oh, yes, you sure do. You take notes on that. Then in the typical American debate, after the main speeches are over, you have a series of rebuttals in which it's all impromptu. You can't prepare a rebuttal if you don't know what the guy is going to say, although you know in general what the arguments of the other side are. You've been thinking about that and tossing that back and forth. So you do have the material for that, but then you're speaking extemporaneously as you get up there and that tests your wit and your nimbleness of tongue and that's fun. If you can do a good job there, you really establish yourself.

Debating Coaches##

[Interview 4: March 20, 1980]

Riess: How did you prepare your points? Did you get any help in gathering your material?

Wilson: I'm sure we followed the procedure of doing as much research as we had time to do in the library, then talking with the faculty adviser about things, and the arguments we would use, and then the debaters themselves arguing among themselves over what were the main issues, how reliable the material was, and now and then we would have practice discussions.

It was interesting though, the change in--we called him a faculty adviser, but really he was a debate coach. Before I came as a freshman, Arnold Perstein in the then public speaking department was actually a debate coach, and he had come from the Middle West and he used the traditional methods. He was a fairly young,

Wilson: very sophisticated, witty and glamorous figure. So was his wife. But when I arrived, he had resigned. There had been some tension created. I don't know why. Ed Rowell had taken over. He was a Ph.D. in philosophy but had been a debater. He was in the department of public speaking and he took over for a year. Then in my sophomore year the debate coach was E.T. Grether from the economics department. He kept the job for a year or two. He was succeeded by Charles Gulick, who was a fine, feisty adviser.

Then the public speaking department imported a young man who came from the Middle West, Gerald E. Marsh. It was in my senior year that Marsh became debate coach and I well remember the reception we organized so that all the debaters could meet the new coach. What a handsome young man he was in those days! Well, he remained a handsome man for all of his life. He became a very powerful person in the university hierarchy--associate dean of letters and science, director of the summer session, and he was for fifteen years chairman of the speech department. He had an M.A. from Carlton College and then a year or two at the Harvard Law School. We found him completely captivating and fascinating. It was he who had to decide which of the many debaters was going to go to England on this international trip and I was the lucky man chosen.

Riess: Grether and Gulick, did they just have to take that on or do you think that was something that they chose to do?

Wilson: Oh, it was an appointment made on the recommendation of a faculty committee to the executive committee of the ASUC. Drama, debating, and all of these activities were not an integral part of the academic system. They were extra activities and it was the ASUC who was responsible. The ASUC paid them (they got paid, these guys) and since at that time they were assistant professors, any extra money was always welcome. The director of the Little Theater, then called, was an employee of the ASUC. (A conversion into the university system has come since the Second World War.) They were paid for their services by the Associated Students, but it was the faculty committee who interviewed them and tried to find out who was available and who would be good at the job.

Riess: According to your scrapbook, Gulick gave a rousing speech to the effect that he would like to emphasize more library work and intellectual endeavor among "my debaters." [laughter]

Wilson: Well, I suspect now (and I suspected at the time) that Charles Gulick, brilliant as he was, was not well acquainted with what had happened to debating at the University of California. He came to us from the University of Texas and I think he was a little behind the times [laughter] because those things--lots of library research

Wilson: certainly--Grether had done this and Rowell had done this and testing your logic with your colleagues and with your coach and so on, it was very much a part of California debating.

Riess: Would economics be a particularly good background for that kind of thinking? Because I see, in fact, that Ira Cross, who was also from economics, was a coach.

Wilson: Not while I was a debater.

Riess: He was, in fact, in that period of time that your scrapbook covers.

Wilson: Really?

Riess: He came in and said that, number one, the debaters were ill-prepared; two, not serious; three, chose inane subjects.

Wilson: [laughter] Well, I think he came in as a speaker, as a critic of the program, and that sounds just exactly like "Doc" Cross. If there was a scrap of evidence, he would latch onto it and exaggerate it then because he liked to be sort of a gadfly and in his econ classes he was a gadfly, always trying to break down preconceived notions, bust an icon, and so on. I remember, for example, when I had Econ 1A or 1B from him he spent some little time debunking the idea that cedar chests keep out moths. [laughter] There was nothing too small that he wouldn't like to debunk a little bit and disillusion us, and it was very good for underclassmen to get that. He is remembered by thousands and thousands of students with a great deal of affection.

Riess: One more name that cropped up was Monroe E. Deutsch.

Wilson: We used to have at the beginning of each year, each semester, what we called a rally. The old debaters would gather and any new students who wanted to try out for the debate team would gather there. It was sort of an evening's program to describe our wares, and what we were doing, to as many students as wanted to come and listen to it. I remember that occasion. We always had a guest speaker and it may be that Cross had been one of those, but I remember distinctly that Monroe Deutsch, then dean of the College of Letters and Science, was because I was the senior and president of the council then and I invited him. He came and made a very stimulating, provocative, and challenging speech. But he was never the week-by-week adviser. We would invite people like Cross and Deutsch to come stimulate us, inspire us.

Riess: So his position of being a chairman for one Cal-Oxford debate, that was just an honorary--

- Wilson: That's right. He presided at the debate; introduced the speakers and so on.
- Riess: I had interrupted you when you were talking about Marsh. You had gotten up to the point where you were chosen to go on the trip.
- Wilson: Do you want to talk about the trip?
- Riess: I guess we could follow through and finish the thinking about the debating. At that point--in your scrapbook--you were a candidate for a Rhodes scholarship and then came the trip.
- Wilson: Yes, that was in December of my first senior year. I explained last time how I was a senior for two years in a row because of being away for a year. There were four or five of us chosen to be the official Berkeley candidates for the Rhodes scholarship. The Rhodes committee decided to interview all candidates, so they said, on the Saturday before final examinations began in Berkeley in December.

John Reynolds was one of the candidates. He was the ASUC president at the time. I was another one. We went to Pat O'Brien, the assistant dean of students, and said, "We can't go down. We'll be up to our ears studying for finals." He tried calling Los Angeles and tried to get us a special time to go since no other university was having finals at that time. They said, "Absolutely, no." They wanted all of the candidates together for an all-day session, so they could listen to them and compare them.

So we made arrangements and went down there and spent the day in Los Angeles and came back later that night and studied on Sunday as much as we could. The ironic thing was that the Rhodes scholarship that year went not to a single person who had been at that all-day meeting but to a Stanford graduate who had been in Harvard all year as a graduate student.

Pat O'Brien was fit to be tied. He called them and wrote them and said it was a downright falsehood that they had said that you have to be present there. "Here you give the Rhodes scholarship to a man who has been out of California for most of the year and was interviewed last summer, and you couldn't arrange to interview our men." Well, the hope for a Rhodes scholarship ended in kind of a disillusionment then. I had forgotten about it.

The All-California Debate Team

Wilson: But then the following spring this debate trip came up. At the beginning it wasn't supposed to be an international trip. I have forgotten who conceived of the idea that we should have what we called then an all-California team; that is, a team of three people made up of one man from USC, one from Stanford, and one from the University of California-Berkeley. It was going to be an eastern trip and meet the Ivy League schools.

Unbeknownst to us, the American Federation of Students had been invited by the English Union of Students to send over a United States team to debate in fourteen or fifteen English universities. This agency in New York City was nonplussed: "How can we possibly choose a United States team?" Then suddenly they heard that three men from the West Coast representing three different institutions were coming to the East Coast, calling themselves the all-California team. They said, "This is the solution to our problem. We'll just invite them to go on to England and represent the whole United States." That's the way it turned out. So it was a surprising turn of events.

Then, of course, each of the three universities had to find money. The National Federation of American Students didn't have any money. Each debater had to find money to get him over there. In my case the ASUC provided the funds. They paid my way to England. When we got there we were guests of the various universities where we visited, but my passage to England and incidental expenses were paid by the ASUC. In those days, we had a phrase, "gravy train," which has since disappeared; the student leaders who got special privileges were said to be on the gravy train, and I certainly was accused of having devised the most lavish gravy train of all time by getting a free trip to England!

Riess: Princeton, Harvard, Chicago, Columbia, Dartmouth, Pennsylvania--they all must have been very sophisticated and super.

Wilson: Well, they sound as though they should be, but I remember, for example, the debate at Columbia was, oh, very badly arranged and the meager audience--I think the reason I remember that is because I had a cousin on my father's side who was doing graduate work at Columbia and came to hear me and she was very disappointed and ashamed. The Columbia debaters seemed to be poorly prepared and not very interested in it, and Columbia hadn't made very much out of it. I don't remember any very vivid experiences for those eastern debates.

Wilson: My memories center around the debates in England where there was a tremendous amount of interest because the debating societies at the English universities were the training ground for their politicians, for their statesmen. If you wanted to be a member of the House of Commons, why, then you trained to be a good speaker in the debating unions and they all often had members of Parliament come down and join them in their debates. So they were the lively ones with audience reaction and with the audience vote at the end and with the very lavish hospitality too.

Riess: You started out with debate topics all pre-arranged?

Wilson: That's right. We submitted these both to the eastern universities and the English universities. "Which would you like to debate?" I think we had four topics that we submitted. We were prepared to take either side of both topics too.

Riess: I didn't realize that. Is it a flip of the coin?

Wilson: By pre-arrangement. It seems to me that with the Cambridge Union the topic was that "this house deplores the prevailing cynicism in modern thought and literature." We had split teams for that. I've forgotten which side I was on or which side anybody was on. But we were prepared, in general, if the topic permitted that kind of a spread. When we debated at Oxford "that one could live happier in America than in England," we didn't split that up! It became a jolly exchange of insults, banter. But the serious ones, we could split the teams if we felt like it.

Riess: Was there a coach traveling with you?

Wilson: No. We were coached by our individual coaches and then we had-- [pause] my memory is a little dim about this. I think we had a session down in Los Angeles with a debate coach of USC and the debate coach of Stanford there. I don't remember Gerry Marsh coming down at that time. But I remember those two being there to listen to us and to discuss arguments and to try to add as many light touches as possible.

The debate coach from Stanford was a Professor Emerson, a very mellow, charming man. The debater chosen from Stanford was Robert McClintock, who even then was training for the diplomatic corps and indeed he went into the United States diplomatic corps and became a United States ambassador. Some years ago I remember he was our ambassador to Argentina, but I lost complete track of him. The USC representative was a handsome, curly-haired chap named Greg Bautzer. He aspired to be a lawyer and indeed he became a very famous--even notorious--Hollywood lawyer who arranged for divorces for all the Hollywood stars and got them out of mix-ups and so on.

Wilson: I don't know what I was aspiring to be at the time. I guess I was aspiring to be a professor of English. It got changed a lot. All three of us went right into the careers we had planned at that time.

Riess: Were they congenial companions?

Wilson: Yes. I don't think we would have naturally gravitated to each other had we all been on the same campus. But under these circumstances, we got along very well and admired each other. We had completely different styles of presentation, and this was good.

We had several meetings. I remember that the McClintocks gave a big family dinner for us. Bob McClintock had a twin brother who was also a debater. Bob was a very precise, sharp-witted guy. They said even as a student you could never get him angry or make him lose his temper or lose his poise. He was the model diplomat even then, an unusual boy to have followed this career and trained himself, I suppose, as a child. I'm sorry I never got to see him actually practicing diplomacy!

Riess: I wanted to ask you about the careers of some of your fellow debaters.

Wilson: Well, one was Louis Heilbron, who is one of San Francisco's top attorneys. His son is a professor of history here. He has been a civic leader in many, many things. He was once chairman of the trustees of the state colleges and universities. In that first international debate with Cambridge I think it was Louis and I. Bernie Witkin was one of the leading debaters and he had become a famous man. I don't know whether Bernie is still alive or not, but he gave the short course in preparation for the bar, and he had written the books which codified all California laws. Anybody who aspired to pass the bar would take Bernie Witkin's course. One time, at least fifteen years ago, when I saw Bernie he sighed heavily and he said, "I'm a rich man and I never aspired to be. When I was in college just a year or two ahead of you, I thought I wanted to do good works and devote myself to social causes and then I got into this business of writing books and practicing law and everything I touched turned into money!" I said [sighing], "Oh, Bernie, if only that had happened to me!" [laughter]

Riess: You traveled by ship, obviously.

Wilson: Yes, on a little vessel belonging to the Red Star Line. (The Red Star Line and the White Star Line became Cunard, I guess.) It was called the Penland. We had a lovely time going over there, getting acquainted with all of the traditions of sea travel. We were assigned seating. There were two seatings for every meal--breakfast, lunch, and dinner. It was wonderfully exhilarating.

- Wilson: We were welcomed in England, although I don't remember the welcoming committee or the first days. But I do remember the fun of traveling on English trains, which were just marvels of economy and swiftness and dependability.
- Riess: It was your responsibility to get yourselves from one place to another?
- Wilson: No, the National Union of Students had made up a schedule for us and arranged the debates and they sort of saw to it that we got around.

British Hosts

- Wilson: All the details now are vague in my mind, but I remember one happy occasion. We were invited to a reception at Number 11 Downing Street--not Number 10. Mrs. Philip Snowden was having this reception to honor the National Union of Students there. She was the wife of the chancellor of the exchequer, a cabinet position. Oh, they had a lot of very elegant people there in the drawing room and there were speeches made. I think they were raising money for the National Union of Students.

Sometime at the meeting we were introduced as the three visitors from the U.S.A. who were now on a big trip and enjoying the good offices of the National Union of Students. We each one stood up and sat down and there was a silence and I thought, "Somebody's got to say something." So I put up my hand. "Yes, Mr. Wilson?"

I said, "I feel that I cannot let the moment pass without saying a word or two of thanks." Then I do remember--because this made a hit--I said, "We're all here from California, and California is famous for its hospitality. We, as a matter of fact, believe that we extend the warmest and the most gracious hospitality in the world, but now we're having to amend that because the English, who we thought were going to be cold and stand-offish, can beat California in its hospitality and I'll go home and tell all California this." And there was a great burst of applause, clapping, and so I did the right thing at the moment.

I also remember another thing. A man, he was then Mr. Duveen, who became Lord Duveen, one of the greatest art critics in the English-speaking world, came up afterwards and introduced himself and said, "I know you're very busy, but I would love to take you gentlemen to lunch or to dinner someplace in London." We hemmed and hawed and said we were too busy and missed the chance--I didn't know who he was then!

Riess: Is that the end of the story?

Wilson: Yes, and later on when I was on my own in Paris I took some courses at the Louvre and there was an American woman who gave little courses and lectures every other day, taking people around, and all she did was mention what Duveen said of this painting and what Duveen said of this statue. Pretty soon I said to her, "Is that the Englishman, you know, so-and-so-and-so-and-so?" "Well, yes." "Well, I turned down a luncheon date with him." "Oh!" she said, "I can't believe it."

Now there is a wing on the British Museum, the Duveen Wing, where all of what the English call the Elgin marbles, the statuary from the Parthenon (we say "Elgin" [pronounces with a soft "g"], but they say the "Elgin" [pronounces with a hard "g"]) are housed in the Duveen Wing, which he endowed and gave to them. Whenever I go in there, and anytime I'm in London I love to see those sculptures again, why, I think, "Here is Lord Duveen now! [laughter] I once turned down a luncheon invitation with him."

We had one debate in Wales at Aberystwyth. They were very charming. Our hosts were worried about the possibility of us running into what they called "a rag," that is, heckling and all kinds of pranks during the course of the debate, because they said that on various occasions there was an organized group that would rag the debaters unmercifully. They were very apprehensive, but it didn't develop.

Riess: Did you have any trouble understanding those Welshmen?

Wilson: No. They enjoyed our accents and we enjoyed their accents. It was at the University of Redding, we were close to Yorkshire country there, where I first heard a real Yorkshire accent. This was a chambermaid. In our room there was a gas fixture. It was cold and we couldn't get the gas turned on. We couldn't get it started. So we rang the bell and the maid came. We said that we didn't know how to turn on the gas furnace there.

She replied with instructions and we looked at each other in amazement. "Is she speaking English?" It was delightful, but incomprehensible. Then we said, "Would you please repeat that?" At about the third repetition it started to emerge that she was using English words with a Yorkshire accent, almost impenetrable. But we didn't run into that in any of the formal situations.

One little incident comes back to me too. I think it was at the University of Bristol. Oh, there was a big crowd. It was held, as I recall, in the town hall. They had a large audience to hear "the Yanks" speak. In the town hall there was an organ and at the end of

Wilson: the debate it was announced that the organist would play "God Save the Queen" and "The Star Spangled Banner." We recognized "God Save the Queen," but "The Star Spangled Banner" was almost unrecognizable. We couldn't figure out why. The organist came afterward and said, "It's a very difficult piece and it goes way high and way low." The notes or the stops on the organ or something were out of order just then, so he had to improvise. [laughter] So that's why "The Star Spangled Banner" sounded so strange!

We had one debate at Gray's Inn. That was the only non-collegiate. When you study for the bar you have to be a member of one of the inns. Gray's Inn heard we were coming and invited us to debate with these young barristers. I remember that as being a very pleasant occasion, although the details escape me.

Oxford and Cambridge have a publication, a regular monthly magazine, in which they review the debates very, very carefully at length.

Riess: Yes, I think I saw one of them in your scrapbook and they were hard on their own men--very hard on their own men--and really impressed with the substance of the American debates, so you must have left your mark.

This hadn't been an annual event, had it?

Wilson: No, we were the first American team to go. Since then, there have been others. But in the years before that, beginning with that first Oxford team which my memory says was '24, and then Oxford and Cambridge, they had been saying to their National Union of Students, "We need a return group." So we were the first.

Riess: When you were in London you received an invitation from a newspaper editor to write your views. Did you follow up on that?

Wilson: Yes, I did, but I wrote a very bad piece as I recall and they published only a little part of it. They paid me the full money for it, but as I think back on it, I was trying to be too flip and too smart-alecky.

Riess: That's what I was wondering, whether the debating style would translate into written--

Wilson: It didn't, and some of the American slang didn't. I realized later--too late--that that was the wrong approach I had taken. I should have been much more complimentary--as I really felt. But I was trying to be smart-alecky and that was wrong.

Riess: I noted also in a newspaper interview before you left that you thought you might be tempted to put your impressions on the debate tour in a book.

Wilson: I wrote an article, but by the time I had written the article Bob McClintock had also written a very fine article and it had been published in the Stanford Alumni Magazine and copies of that had been sent all over. So I just dropped the idea.

Much later, somebody sent me a little clipping from the Stanford Alumni Magazine and it was a letter to the editor from Bob McClintock. I guess it was on the occasion of the death of Professor Emerson, who retired and lived quite a while and then died. McClintock had received this news and then wrote a little letter praising Professor Emerson and mentioning the fact that Professor Emerson had been one of the coaches, or the coach I guess Bob said, for this international debate team of which he, Bob, was captain. And that came as a great surprise to me! I was tempted to send the clipping to Greg Bautzer and say, "Are you as surprised as I am that we had a captain?" [laughter] But there may have been something somewhere which made McClintock feel that he was captain. Maybe he was a spokesman here and there.

Travels in Europe

Wilson: Well, when the debating was over in May the team split up. I went to Paris and there waited for the arrival of my two colleagues from Berkeley. David Chase and Bauer Kramer joined me in Paris for a glorious summer of cycling and canoeing.

I'll never forget arriving in Paris. England had been cold and foggy and rainy most of the spring. Here it was mid-May. I took the night boat across the channel and then a boat-train into Paris and walked out of the station into a glorious spring day, bright sunshine, the chestnut trees in bloom, the girls in their summer dresses, and it was another world. I'll never forget the thrill of that! I had been studying a little book, a student's guide to Europe (hotels and restaurants), and I picked out the Hotel D'Alsace on the Rue des Beaux Arts. I was determined I was going to find my way there by bus, and I did. I checked my bags in the station, found the way by bus, registered for a room, then went back by bus or Metro, but returned in a taxi because I had two big bags.

Wilson: I had a week in Paris all alone before the others joined me. I had this week just to poke around by myself in this lovely spring weather and to run onto monuments. The first evening I went out I found myself in front of Notre Dame Cathedral and I couldn't believe [laughter] that I had just been sauntering and here it was!

Incidentally, that little Hotel D'Alsace has now been remodeled into a most elegant small hotel that's very famous. If you want to get in there you have to reserve months ahead. Also, and I knew this at the time, it was the hotel where Oscar Wilde died. They now have a plaque. In my student days in 1930 it was a very modest little hotel and very, very inexpensive. A tiny little room with a French window looking out over the roofs of Paris, and that delighted me too. Every morning a very superior cat would come walking carefully over the roofs and into my room and sniff around and then walk out. The cats on the left bank were great. You'd go into a grocery store and be feeling around the vegetables and pull out a cat. They'd be nestling in the displays and so on. Since I like cats--

Riess: What good memories! You had arranged to meet these friends from the fraternity?

Wilson: Yes, these friends of mine from Berkeley--No, Bauer Kramer had been a debater here with me and David Chase had been, oh, goodness, everything on campus. He had been Phi Beta Kappa and a Big C man and the same term he was president of Stiles Hall and president of the interfraternity council. So he was a wonderful, all-around person. He had been in Spain before he joined us in Paris.

Bauer came over and joined us and then David Chase had invited an American boy whom he had met on the boat coming over named David Leves (we called him "Dal" because there were two Daves). The kid was very homesick. His family lived at the Villa Galileo in Florence, Italy, but he hated it and he would leave home and stow himself on a ship and get back to the U.S.A. and then his folks would have to yank him back to Florence. He was being sent home when David Chase met him, and David Chase took pity on him and said, "Join us in our tour this summer and you'll be with Americans." So Dal did very joyously. Bauer and I started out being a little out of patience with him because he was younger and doing foolish things now and then. We ended by liking him tremendously and it was very hard parting from him.

In Paris we bought bicycles and the brand name was Leo D'Or (golden lion), so we said we were golden bears riding on golden lions! And we cycled for a thousand miles up through northern France, across Belgium and into Germany, down Germany to Munich.

Wilson: In Munich, we bought two used kayak canoes, or foldbots as the Germans called them, and we canoed down the Rhine River into the Danube and to Vienna and into Budapest in these boats and that was just glorious sport--nothing like it.

Riess: I think of it as a pretty commercial river, the Danube.

Wilson: Oh, not at that time. It was beautifully organized for kayacking or foldboting because at the end of the day you would--well, we had a regular map of the river, showing where there were rapids, places you were supposed to avoid, and then we had a map of where the inns were that took boats and so we'd just head for one of these floats out there. A bellboy would come running down and we'd get out and help him. They would take our luggage out of it--we had just little packs in the canoes--take them out and take the canoe up to a shed and then find a room and they would prepare us meals. It was delightful the way it was organized.

The Germans are very cautious in their sports. I remember one stretch of the river that we had been warned about for two or three days which had the "seven deadly whirlpools," and you should by all means get out at this point and carry your boat around to avoid the seven deadly whirlpools. Well, we were not very worried, and that day we were going along and noticed some turbulence in the river and we had to do a little more paddling and steering and we saw people on the bank, shouting and waving their arms at us. [laughter] And we waved back and went right through. When we got through and came to the next town we discovered we had paddled our way through the seven deadly whirlpools without any ill effects!

Riess: Had you ever done any canoeing?

Wilson: No, never. We had hardly any sense.

Riess: You had an airplane ride too on that trip.

Wilson: My first airplane ride.

Then, let's see. We ended at Budapest. I guess we took trains. [pause] We had intended to do more bicycling and had shipped our bicycles to Budapest and they never arrived. They never arrived any place. We left instructions to have them forwarded, I guess down to Florence, and, of course, they never arrived.

So we went by train to Florence and then we took a night train to Rome. I remember it was in a third-class compartment. Dal stayed with his folks in Florence and I guess the three of us went

Wilson: down to Rome, Bauer and Dave and myself. I know I went back to Paris for a month and then got very homesick and changed my passage and came back to Berkeley in November, 1930, then went to Los Angeles where my folks were living, got a job during the Christmas rush at Bullock's men's store, and then in January it was time to return to college and register for my final semester, which I did, and then was graduated in May of 1931, and by some strange fluke was the commencement speaker for the class of '31.

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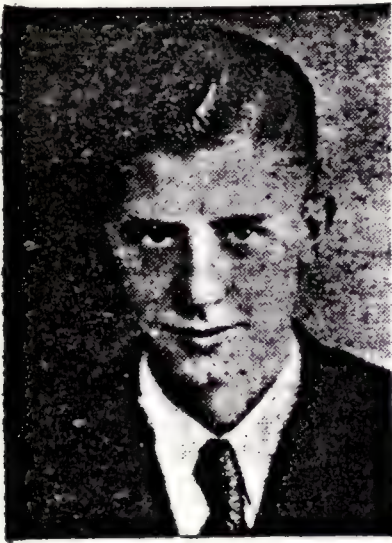
Wilson: That trip was the most broadening experience of my life. I recall that Professor Harold Bruce, a professor of English, was then dean of the summer sessions. I was taking a private class from him. If you could get a tutor, he would assign you reading and you would go and talk to him now and then about it. Harold Bruce is a digression, but it's worth digressing. When people said, "Oh, Cal is so big," I'd say, "Let me tell you the size of my classes my first semester as a senior. I had one class in which there were fifteen of us, a French class. I had one class that was a lecture class. I had another class in which there were three of us, and I had one class in which I was the only one."

Well, I had asked Professor Bruce's advice about whether I should take the opportunity to stay over after the debate trip was finished or rush back to summer session. He said, "Oh, you don't want to go to our stuffy old summer session when you have a chance to stay in Europe," I said, "I'm beginning to feel that way because this may be the only opportunity I'll ever have to see France and so on." He chuckled and said, "Mark my word, once you have been there you will not rest until you go back and back and back. So you take the summer and the fall off if you want to and see as much as you can."

I was poor and I had to borrow and scrape up money from several sources. My fraternity lent me some money. The historical society in my home town of Ogden, Utah, heard about this and lent me some money, and various other people did. So I borrowed enough money to stay for several months after the debate trip was over and I dutifully repaid it in time. But that's the way it was. The ASUC paid my passage to England and from England, and that was a big, big item. I was on my own the rest of the time.

A couple of years ago I received a letter from some national debate organization saying that they were honoring some anniversary of international debating and since I had been a member of the first team, would I write them a letter saying what it meant to me, and I did. I made a couple of mistakes on the letter and had crossed out words and put in my own handwriting in it. They reproduced the letter in this publication, a photocopy of the original thing! I was very angry about that. But I remember quoting that I thought I

Garff Wilson



Debater Back After Journey Over Europe

**Garff Wilson Praises Style
Of Debating Used by
American Colleges**

After six months debating and touring in Europe, Garff Wilson '30, varsity debater at the University, feels "That he is glad to be 5000 miles away and in California."

He, with two others, one from Stanford and another from the University of Southern California, represented the United States in a tour of England. They were sent on this trip in order that they might return the visit of the Oxford-Cambridge team which debated in America recently. The trio was sent by the National Federation of American Students.

Wilson Disillusions English on California

Wilson believes that the American type of debating is superior to that in England, as the English do not go out for serious argument. They strive for wit and brilliancy, but their speeches lack seriousness, he says. However, their system of judging is more stimulating than ours, as the audience chooses the winners, and there is open forum discussion after the debate, Wilson said.

"The English were interested in us not only because we were Americans, but especially because we were from California. Their information about California is gained from the funny papers, from Sinclair Lewis and from the cinema. We had the privilege of correcting their views of many things and of spreading California propaganda over a large area.

Debaters Take Vagabond Trip Through Europe

The California team was awarded 13 out of 15 decisions.

After the English towns were visited, the three men went on a vagabond tour of the continent. They bicycled for a 1000 miles through Belgium, France and Switzerland. According to Wilson, "We canoed on the Danube for 700 miles as far east as Budapest, rode in third class Italian trains, flew in first class airplanes and tried every mode of travel except a horse and buggy."

They stayed usually in tiny inns and peasant cottages. The peasants were very interested in everything American, but are still quite backward, as is shown by the fact that in one place the innkeeper had never seen a fountain pen.

The travelers made observations about the political situation in Europe. They said: "The countries are friendly toward America and bitter toward each other. England feels that France has let her down since the war. Germany is still nursing post-war feelings, Austria and Hungary are living for the day when they will be strong enough to gain back the territory they lost by the war. France and Italy are at sword-points and Russia is still working for a world revolution.

"To quote Richard Haliburton, 'it was a glorious adventure,' but it's great to be back in Berkeley. After seeing Europe, I'm convinced that Berkeley is the most beautiful spot in the world and that California women are best looking women in the world."

U. C. CLASS SPEAKER SCORES CYNICISM IN COMMENCEMENT TALK

BERKELEY, May 00.—As one of the two speakers chosen to represent the class of 1931 at the sixty-eighth Commencement Day exercises of the University of California in the Memorial Stadium last week, Garff B. Wilson, senior student, exhorted his classmates to take a saner, happier view of life and its opportunities, and scored the destructive cynicism which is the keynote of such writings as those of H. L. Mencken, and the motivating force behind cheap, sex literature and drama.

Wilson titled his address "The Current Cult of Cynicism." He said in part: "We see a host of poets, novelists and thinkers who, as Paul Elmer More says, 'are deliberately preying on the intellectual defeat and spiritual dismay of the times as vultures fatten themselves on carrion.' Unlike the Greek doubters, they do not question, they condemn. They not only find the present 'a long headache on a noisy street,' but the future a shapeless chaos. And, unlike any other age, we find this view of things which is always a 'snapper up of unconsidered' fads, embracing this fashion of thought, and noisily flaunting a futilitarian credo. Thus there has been born the Current Cult of Cynicism."

Defines the Cynic Referred to

In further definition of his subject, Wilson added: "The cynicism which I am questioning is the contemptuous negation of human values and human motives. It is the honest perception of the seamy, futile side of life, but the dishonest refusal to see anything else. The manifestations of this outlook are many.

"We see it in the supercilious undergraduate, who strikes a cheaply saturnine pose and murmurs, 'Nothing matters, and it jolly well doesn't matter if it does.'

"We see it in a host of panderers to pornography, who use the doctrines of negation as a license for cheap hedonism, and adopt as their motto the statement, 'this is the worst of all possible worlds, and let's try to make it a little worse.'



"We see it in the literature of the time—in these plays which are written with one eye on the box office and the other on the police station. We see it in these movies about women who thought it right to go wrong; in these stories which go just beyond decency and stop just short of wit. We see it in these writers who are not concerned with women of the past, but women with a past; who do not look to normal experience for their inspiration but to the dissecting room or the psychopathic ward; who no longer feel that we can have a proper study of mankind, as it must now be grossly improper.

Abundant Life Still Possible

"But this, I think, is not the case. If one set of values has been found wanting, must we then believe that there is no possibility for perceiving another set? If some men cannot have faith in a future life, must we all, then, cease having faith in this life?

"I am not recommending, here, the espousal of platitudinous optimism or patented 'Pollyanna-ism.' The cultivation of a 'smile, boys, smile,' philosophy, which is recommended so obstreperously by certain groups merely intensifies the evil, providing more substance for the gloating contempt of the cynic. I wish only—to suggest that there is still opportunity for living the abundant life."

CALIFORNIA MEMORIAL STADIUM

BERKELEY, MAY 13

1931

Wilson: had better take advantage of staying in Europe because it might be the only chance, and that I had been told this wouldn't be the case and I said that it wasn't the case. That was the first trip, but I have been back at least fifteen or sixteen times.

Riess: Did you become a regular at the D'Alsace?

Wilson: No, the next time I went back was unexpected. This was in 1930 and the army of occupation had just left Germany from the First World War. I remember going through German villages which had big signs saying "Deutsch ist der Rhein" (the Rhine is once more German).

Well, the bicycle boys and the kayak boys decided that they would have a tenth reunion in 1940, that we would all meet at the Café de la Paix in Paris for the tenth reunion. But France was occupied in 1940. There was no chance. However, my unit in the Army had been moved to Europe in 1944 in the winter and I was sent to a one-week school in Paris in January in 1945. I went to the Café de la Paix sentimentally and all they had to serve was watery beer. I wrote postcards to Bauer and to Dave saying, "I'm five years late, but I'm at the Café de la Paix. Where are you?"

So my second trip was in the Army and then I became a tour leader in '50, '52, and '53, and '63. The ASUC provided me the first trip. The Army provided me with the second trip, and I've been a tour leader four different trips. But I've been on my own several other times because I fell in love with every city. Paris is my first love, and so it went.

Riess: What was your second?

Wilson: I guess Budapest on that trip was the second love and Florence was one of the loves. London is now very high on my list. Athens was during the sixties, that was the city I loved best.

Thirties Attitudes and Values

Riess: As class speaker in 1931 your subject was cynicism. Was this an issue at the time, a cult of cynicism?

Wilson: Yes, there was a lot of talk and I remember in the Atlantic Monthly essays about an argument about the prevailing cynical attitude and how it was corrupting native values in American life, and was it a passing thing or was it here to stay, and examples in literature and in drama and so on.

Riess: Mencken was the writer who was the master cynic.

Wilson: Mencken, of course. Well, it was during the time of Sinclair Lewis's Main Street. Sinclair Lewis was a great debunker too of the thing, "Babbittry," and everybody was making fun of Rotarians and service clubs and the "booboisie" as Mencken called it, the Bible Belt and so on. The institutions of which we had been very, very proud for a long while were now being scorned and derided. This alarmed a good many people and made for the debate on cynicism.

I think it was probably the aftermath of the roaring twenties along with the false values that were cultivated (a good many of them) and the false hopes that were cultivated. Then came the stock market crash and the collapse of the economy and so all kinds of values were questioned. We had been living in a phony world and that era ended when the war clouds gathered in Europe and the Second World War broke out there and then the great debate became pacifism and can we stay out of war. Roosevelt clearly saw that we could not, and he understood the global situation, but his adversaries led by Senator Taft voted against the draft, voted against lend-lease, voted against all of these things which were the ways of trying to get us somewhat prepared. Then, of course, the Japanese made that colossal, historic mistake of wiping out our fleet at Pearl Harbor and galvanizing the nation. So then the whole nation was united as one person, as only war can unite a nation.

Riess: So the cynics then--

Wilson: Then the cynics became very unpopular and had very little to say. After the Second World War came an era of great prosperity. We had Harry Truman succeeding Roosevelt and doing a very competent job of readjusting the nation to a peacetime economy. Then we needed a breather and along came Eisenhower, who was a do-nothing president, and that suited the 1950s. After the traumatic experiences of the world depression and the Second World War and living under the anxieties and the dangers and the threats of those times, why, it was natural that you would want to breathe and to relax and to forget the problems.

When I make speeches to class reunions of the fifties I say, "Be proud of the fact that you were called the Silent Generation. You weren't actively involved in war. You were too young, but you experienced the anxieties of the Depression, the anxieties of the war. You watched your older brothers and your parents and so on struggling with this. You lived in an age of anxiety."

So when the fifties came and the father figure of Eisenhower was in the White House, it was natural that the country would want to stop crusading. [chuckles] We could survive now. Let's just buckle down and enjoy studying. The veterans who came back to the

Wilson: campus didn't want to crusade for anything. They had had their crusade. They played hard and they studied hard. They weren't interested in other causes, and when the generation of the sixties came they had escaped those anxieties and they were ready now to slay the dragons--racism, sexism, and everything else. And so we had the troubled sixties at the end and in the early seventies. Now, we're in the eighties. We're back in a more tranquil period, aren't we?

Riess: Not quite.

The other speaker in 1931 was Mary Woods Bennett. Her speech was titled "Why so seeming fast?" and it had to do with the aimlessness, and absence of goals in the country. "To have goals is to have peace and a quiet mind."

Wilson: Well, you know that Mary Woods Bennett had a delightful career. She got a Ph.D. in psychology here and started to teach at Mills and became the dean of the faculty at Mills and she was acting president of Mills for a long while. She has now retired, a very distinguished educator. She's still a handsome woman really and looks so well preserved. We meet now and then. She also is a Berkeley Fellow, one of the chosen hundred. We view each other; we talk about the state of preservation.

She was one of our alumni day bicentennial lecturers too, on women in education or something. She spoke at a 9:30 hour and didn't have a very good audience. Afterward, some very militant female came up to her and said, "Dr. Bennett, I want to write a letter of protest to somebody in this university for putting you on at 9:30 in the morning, when obviously not many people want to go and listen to a lecture. I think it's shameful!"

Dr. Bennett looked her in the eye and said, "Young lady, you better check your facts before you write any letters. I was offered any hour during the day to present my remarks and I chose 9:30 in the morning. It was my personal choice. Now, I think one of the first principles of education for women is that they be smart enough to get the information before they make accusations." [laughter] She just turned like a good old dean and said, "Now, you're talking through your hat! You don't know what you're saying!" And I was just so delighted to see Mary Woods, this executive, a very smart gal--she always has been, always has been.

Riess: It's interesting that aimless activity would be a problem in 1931. I mean that was the Depression.

Wilson: But we didn't realize yet that there was so much difficulty ahead, that it was going to be so bad, that unemployment was going to mount and so on, and that everything was going to just drift away. We certainly didn't realize it in 1930 when we were debating that the American doctrine of prosperity is sound and if we were just smart we would continue to be the richest power in the world, and right then the whole substructure was sinking and we didn't realize it. Hardly anybody at the beginning could foresee the extent it was and poor President Hoover was completely caught. He didn't grasp the enormity of the problem that was developing.

III HUMBOLDT STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE

Wilson: Well, the tour finally ended and I came back and I graduated in '31. I got little jobs around to keep me here during the summer. I then applied for a teaching fellowship in English because I wanted to do graduate work. I was a teaching fellow for two years and I got my master's degree, and then looked for a job. The summer of 1933 was not the happiest time to go job hunting because the Depression was now starting to take its real toll.

Since I was looking for a teaching job, I was naturally registered with our placement office. Mrs. May Cheney was the placement secretary for years and an impressive woman she was for rustling up jobs, for pursuing you. I had interviews with two or three people, including one interview with a man who was president of a girls' college, and I completely queered my chances for getting a job there by saying, "When you hire a play director I hope you hire a man because women are not very good at this." [laughter] How undiplomatic can you get?

Riess: Why aren't women good directors? Or have you changed your mind on this?

Wilson: I've changed my mind. I now know that there are many good female directors.

During that summer Mrs. Cheney was looking for [a job for] me and keeping track of where I was. One sunny afternoon I was up at the old Strawberry Canyon pool--for men only. The pool phone rang and the attendant came out, and he knew me, and he said, "Garff, somebody wants to talk to you." I said, "Here?" "Yes."

It was May Cheney and she said [imitates stern voice], "Garff Wilson, you get dressed and you come right down to my office because I have an interview for you in one hour's time in San Francisco."

Wilson: "Yes, Mrs. Cheney." She said, "I have had one devil's own time finding you. I had the library paged. I had your fraternity house, I had every address covered, and then somebody said that you're a swimmer and you might be up there so, by golly, here you are."

I got down there and she said, "Arthur S. Gist, president of Humboldt State Teachers College, is looking for a speech and drama teacher. He's at the Stewart Hotel in San Francisco. He'll be there around four o'clock and he wants to interview you."

So I got all dressed up and went over there. Fortunately, I took a book along with me. I thought he was going to be waiting in the lobby for me. I asked for President Gist. The desk clerk said, "He's gone out." "How long will he be gone?" "Well, he didn't say." I said, "I'll wait for him. I'll sit in the lobby and wait for him and when he comes in tell him that Mr. Wilson is here waiting for him."

Five o'clock came, no Gist; six o'clock came, no Gist. I was getting hungry. I had been debating, should I leave and come back some other time? No, no, I'd get hell from Mrs. Cheney. I had spent three hours, so I might as well sit here until he gets here. Well, I said to the desk clerk, "I want a sandwich. I'll go around the corner to a sandwich shop and get one," and I raced right back. I sat and read.

When he showed up at 11 p.m. he was somewhat startled to find me waiting in the lobby for him--for seven hours, from four o'clock in the afternoon until eleven o'clock. He was a very jovial man with a good, sly sense of humor and we sat and talked for another half an hour or so.

He said, "Well, I've got some other candidates to interview, but I will let Mrs. Cheney know very soon." She told me later that he called her the next morning and said, "I want him, I want Wilson, but there are some things I want to straighten out first." So I got my first job, and Mrs. Cheney said it was the best job she gave out that whole summer. That began my very heartwarming and delightful career at Humboldt State.

Riess: You had been looking for jobs as an English teacher rather than a speech and drama coach?

Wilson: Yes, yes, but President Gist said, "Oh, they're all the same thing. You can do what I have in mind." It turned out when up there I did teach an English course now and then. For example, I was asked to teach a course in great books. So I copied the one I had from Walter Morris Hart. But mostly it was to direct the plays and teach all of the speech courses. He had said he would want me to direct some plays.

Wilson: That summer I stayed at our summer theater and worked with Everett Glass, and was in a play or two with Everett and watched him direct and so on. But it was somewhat of a surprise when I arrived up there and discovered I was expected to do all of the dramatic coaching and do all the speech classes. This being the Depression now, the enrollments had gone up for a while and then they were going down. Humboldt State was then fighting for its life. The enrollment was down between three and four hundred students. The legislature was in dire straits and wondering how they should cut, and there was a real possibility that they would have just abolished the college completely to save money.

The residents up there and the faculty and so on were willing to do with very little. Everything was cut to the bone, the programs. But it made a fine little family who became very closely knit during these hard times. President Gist kept the thing together and kept the thing going.

Riess: So it was like a community theater?

Wilson: Well, no, we organized what I called the Humboldt College Players. The first play I directed up there was a play called Interference, which I had seen our Little Theater do here, and it was a smash hit. I was so excited by that, I immediately started another play and they became so successful that I put on five plays a year in the college auditorium. We spent all our time improving and trying to improve the stage and the facilities of the auditorium. But I then got myself into a program where I was the sole director five times a year, although one of those occasions was usually a program of one-act plays, but four full-length plays. So I just went from one to the other.

Riess: You were drawing on the student and university population? When I say community theater, I wondered if it was like the "Old Chestnuts"* here?

Wilson: No, only on rare occasions did I do that. It was mostly to give the students experience. I would have tryouts, but most of the time I combed the halls and I knew almost all of the students there. When I was thinking of a certain play I would look to see who could do it--type casting around. It worked out most of the time.

Riess: Anybody can act?

Wilson: In a sense anybody can act given a part that fits him physically and his voice and given a director who can tell him what to do, and this is what I did, but that doesn't mean he can be an actor. I had a

*Old Chestnut Drama Guild, a Berkeley summer stock company, 1970s.

Wilson: few who were versatile young people who assumed different characters and so on. But very often I had to find somebody who just looked the part and walked the part.

The whole college was delighted with this. We used to have an open rehearsal, the first performance, and all the college kids came free, and they would whoop it up.

I always worked myself to a frazzle doing all of that. The one time that I used the community, there was a play called Outward Bound by an English playwright. It's been done many times in the movies under different titles, but the basic situation is the lounge of an ocean liner and these various passengers arrive and they're all a little vague as to where they're going and what they're going to do. Pretty soon it becomes apparent that there's only one servant on the ship. At the end of the first act, you discover that they're all dead, they're outward bound to the next life, whatever it's going to be. This is a fascinating play as the characters start to realize they are dead. The one servant named "Scruffy" is sort of a representative of the inspector who is going to board the ship at the end of the voyage and assign them what their afterlife is going to be.

Well, this seemed a good opportunity to use two of the most well-beloved people in that community. One was Mrs. Nell Brizzard, who was the grand lady of the town. She was also a dramatic reader. The Brizzards had been a pioneer family and they used to own most of the town (they had fallen on hard times), but she was an aristocratic and a wonderful old gal. There was another sweet old lady--I can't remember her name now. But there were two parts in the thing that were just so beautifully suited for them that I invited them to be guest stars there. Oh, this was quite a community event when Mrs. Brizzard and the other lady were going to be in a college play supported by a college cast. The one mistake I made in that was not casting President Gist as the inspector who comes aboard. I put a student in that. President Gist was a little on the plump side and perspired a little bit, but was very jovial, and that was exactly the character.

I directed a couple of plays for the Eureka Community Theater and was helpful to them in many ways, but most of my time and energy was devoted to teaching all of those classes. And whenever there was a new faculty member around, every club and organization in the county has to invite you, and just because the college is in Arcata doesn't mean that it belongs to Arcata. It is Humboldt County.

Riess: Were you a debating coach also?

Wilson: Yes, but I didn't try to develop that. I really became far more interested in drama because after my first year at Humboldt directing those plays, then I spent the summer in Pasadena taking their summer course for actors and directors and whatnot. Then the following two summers I went back to Pasadena as just a general assistant to do all kinds of things in their Shakespeare festivals.

IV CORNELL UNIVERSITY STUDIES

[Interview 6: April 7, 1980]##

Wilson: At Humboldt State I was a big frog in a very small pond, and it was a lovely, heartwarming community. I was faced with the decision whether to stay there for the rest of my life with a master's degree and become a very much entrenched member of that college and that community, or to try my hand at the big league as we called it, get a Ph.D. Well, I thought about that for a year and then I decided I wouldn't be happy in the long run if I didn't try my hand at getting a Ph.D. and teaching in one of the major universities.

Raising the money was the problem. Providentially a woman, Ann Craig, who was head of the physical education department there and had become a good friend of mine--a platonic friend--came into a great deal of money. She came to me one day and said, "I will lend you the money without interest to go to Cornell and to devote all of your time to studying. You can get your Ph.D. in two years. You don't have to work and drag it on and on." This was a miraculous development.

I had been discussing with her whether it would be good for me to stay up there or whether it would be good for me to try my hand at something else. She was a very level-headed, wise person, and the one gesture of thanks I could do, my first book, A History of American Acting, was dedicated to Ann Craig.* I thought very carefully about the dedication and it was just two lines: "For Ann Craig, selfless citizen, faithful friend." And that describes her

*Indiana University Press, 1966.

Wilson: because after she came into all of this money from her family, she felt, although she loved her job there, that it was wrong for her to hold down a job when she didn't need the money and she was depriving somebody else of a job. So she regretfully resigned because as a selfless citizen she felt it was her duty.

Then she devoted her life--she was from Long Beach, California--she joined a lot of volunteer organizations and then was stricken and crippled with arthritis. It was a cruel, undeserved fate for so fine a person as Ann Craig was. She's now dead. But she bore it very heroically and stoically and had everything done that was possible to relieve her pain. She was really crippled; she had to be lifted out of bed, she had to be put in a chair, and so on. Fortunately, she had enough money to have first-rate care, private care. But anyway, it was Ann who came forward and offered to lend me the money which she did.

Alexander Magnus Drummond

Wilson: But then the problem was where I should get my Ph.D. I decided first of all that I should go East since all of my other degrees (all two of them) were from Cal and I knew the Rocky Mountain West and the Pacific Coast, but I had not been East very much. So it should be there. The two top universities in drama at that time were Yale and Cornell. Well, I narrowed it down to that.

After I investigated and talked to a great many people, I discovered that the department at Cornell was smaller and had this fabulous teacher, Alexander Magnus Drummond. So I decided on Cornell. Nobody told me anything about Drummond except that he was a fabulous person. I decided I should help myself a little bit by applying for some kind of a fellowship there. So I wrote Drummond and would always get replies written in longhand and the signature would be "cordially yours." Now, I imagined a fatherly, kindly, genteel type.

Riess: Cordial!

Wilson: [laughter] Yes, "cordially yours!" Well, there was never such a shock in my life as when I presented myself for the first time in his office!

Incidentally, I did get a position on the direction staff of the Cornell University Theater. That gave me a little something to do and a close connection with the dramatic activity there and closer

Wilson: supervision by "the Boss." (Drummond, for all of his students, was "the Boss.") Let me say in summary, as I look back upon it, he is the most fantastically interesting person I have ever met, and the most fabulous teacher I've ever had. You began by loathing him with a passion. You felt so rebellious: "I didn't come here to be insulted and degraded the way Drummond is doing to me!"

Riess: Was he a sort of an autocrat?

Wilson: Oh, a complete autocrat! He was chairman of speech and drama and everything. He chose the cast for every play, graduate and undergraduate. He was the director for some of them. He was on everybody's dissertation committee, directed all of the graduate students. The amount of work he did was unbelievable, but he was a complete czar.

Well, you started out by hating him and you ended by worshiping him and really believing that he was the closest thing to God you would find on this earth because you discovered that he had looked right through you, he understood you as only God could understand you, and understood what you needed.

Riess: Was he accessible to students with problems and things like that?

Wilson: Yes, but you didn't go unless you really had to! I'll come to that in a moment, but I should record my first interview with him.

I had arrived in Ithaca driving across the country and upstate New York, stayed the first night in the hotel in Ithaca. Since I was going to be on Drummond's direction staff and since he had sent me all of these cordial letters, I decided that the first thing I must do was to present myself in his office and thank him. I called up and his secretary said, "Yes, he'll be in."

His office was on the second floor of Goldwin Smith Hall. I knocked at the door and a gruff voice said, "Come in." I opened the door and stepped inside and Drummond was propped up on his crutches with his back to me looking at books (his whole office was lined with bookshelves clear to the ceiling) and he was taking out books and looking at them. He didn't turn around. He continued in his work. I shuffled my feet and cleared my throat. No sign of recognition from Drummond.

Finally, I said, "How do you do, Professor Drummond? I'm Garff Wilson from California." There was a long pause. He looked over his shoulder, looked me up and down, and said, "Be calm." [laughter] "Well, I was calm when I came in, Professor Drummond. I'm getting a little nervous." Another long pause. Another look. "Be calm." I said, "I don't know what to say or what to do." "Be calm."

Wilson: Pretty soon he turned around, walked back to his desk, sat down in his chair, looked at me a long while, and said, "Wilson, eh?" "Yes." He got out a folder and by this time I was a jibbering idiot, that's all. But I discovered later this was part of his technique with smarty graduate students who came to him with a great--well, a great confidence in themselves and a belief that they knew a great deal and were there to help Drummond. He used different techniques for different people, but the end result was that he made you feel so small that you just shut up and listened.

Then Drummond got out my folder and proceeded to go over and assign me the courses he wanted me to take. Absolutely baffled and absolutely dumb, I stumbled out.

All the people on the direction staff had a little office in Willard Straight Hall. Willard Straight was the student union, but it contained the theater, the Willard Straight Theater. We had our office down there close to the theater, all our desks in the same room. I stumbled in there and sat down and the old hands around the room looked at me and said, "Oh, you've had your first interview with the Boss!" "Is he always that way?" They said, "You can never tell how he's going to treat you; you can never tell, but just have confidence in him."

In the ensuing weeks and months in the classroom I became so furious at his technique and his method that I kept saying to them, "I didn't come here to be humiliated this way." They said, "Be calm, be calm. Now, only if the Boss pays you attention and starts working you over, only then can you believe that he's found something, he sees some possibilities in you. If he lets your performance or your responses go with, 'Oh, that's all right, fine, pretty good,' then he's not going to pay any attention to you. You don't have any talent. He's not going to worry about you. But 'Those whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth' and the more he rides you the more he expects to get out of you."

"Well," I said, "he could do it a little more gently."

He taught a class in advanced acting for his graduate students. The first assignment was just to come and read a Shakespearean sonnet for him. The class lasted three hours. It was just once a week, I think. Well, the first person called on was a guy who turned out to be a very gifted actor, David Hawes. He spent two hours standing on his feet before the class and never got past the first two lines of his sonnet. The Boss made him read and reread, giving him different directions every single time. The Boss never repeated, and always asked for a different effect. He spent two hours having David Hawes read two lines and exploring the possible interpretations of those two lines, and I sat there amazed. I don't know whether it was good or bad.

Wilson: I was the second one up. There was only one hour left. He kept me an hour on the first two lines of my sonnet too. Well, that was somewhat of his method.

Not until the end of the year did I start to perceive, and that happened--well, I'll tell it in a minute. But in the beginning of the second semester, Drummond had assigned me a lot of courses and then I went down to see the bulletin board and here he had cast a new play for graduate students and had put me in the play. I said, "This is insupportable. I can't take all of these courses he's assigned me and still be in this play! I've got to go and talk him out of it." My friends said, "Better not, better let things stand." But I was still brash, so I went in.

The result was that after this interview, not only did I have all the courses that he had assigned me previously, and I was still in the play, but I had an additional seminar assigned to me, one that met once a week in the evening at Drummond's own house. So I learned that I should have let it alone.

But that seminar was "studies in American theater" and Drummond assigned me the autobiography of Joseph Jefferson, who was one of the great American comedians in the 19th century and who wrote a very perceptive, thoughtful autobiography talking about American drama and American acting. The Boss wanted me to read it thoroughly and report on every aspect. Well, that was the beginning of my interest in the history of American drama and theater and it was out of that that I eventually got my dissertation, my whole field of expertise. [chuckles] That's one reason I say the Boss had diagnosed me; that this would be good and that I could carry the load, which I didn't think I could. He wanted me--I could see now he wanted me--to finish in two years and not drag on like so many of his graduate students. He discovered that I had borrowed this money and [felt] that I could get done in two years.

All during the course of the second semester I was technical director of a play. The play was being directed by Professor Stainton, and his graduate students had to have activity in every aspect of theater. I was the technical director to see about the scenery and lighting and supervise all that. Well, come the first dress rehearsal and there were two or three characters who had to have beards or moustaches. They were terrible, and Stainton turned to me and said, "Garff, can you do a better job of putting on that false hair than the make-up person?" I said, "I've had a little bit of experience." (I had a class in make-up at the Pasadena Playhouse and I had been doing make-up at Humboldt State.) He said, "Tear off those beards and moustaches and let's see if we can't improve them," which I did, and Stainton was pleased. He said, "Will you do the hair work for this play?" I said, "Sure."

Wilson: Then we took the play to Skidmore College, which is a girls' school in Saratoga, New York. I had gone along with the technical crew, we had set up the stage and so on. I was down in the make-up room putting on a beard. Drummond had come up for the play. He stumped into the room on his crutches and stood behind me watching and he would growl, "Take it easy. The audience has eyes. You don't have to lay it on so thick." And I sat there just burning, thinking, "I'm doing this as a favor to the director, and here I have to be heckled by this old man peering over me." But I held my temper. I knew enough about Drummond then not to say a word.

The play went on and we got back to Ithaca. A week later I was about to rush out of the theater and there was Drummond on his crutches, blocking the doorway. I thought, "I must get around without any conversation with him" [chuckles], but he blocked the doorway and I said, "Good afternoon, Mr. Drummond." I tried to get to this side, to that side. He just stood there.

Then in his usual, very roundabout fashion he said, "I suppose you're going back to California this summer?" I said, "Well, I hope to get there, at least for a time." He said, "I suppose you have all kinds of things to do back there?" I said, "No, I don't have very much to do." "I suppose you have lots of job offers." I said, "No, sir." He said, "Well, if you would care to"--he hemmed and hawed--"to teach in our summer session here, teach a course in make-up, why, I could find a place for you. But I suppose you wouldn't be interested in that."

I was so flabbergasted I didn't know what to say! I said, "May I think about it, Mr. Drummond?" He said, "Certainly, think about it and let me know in a week or two." I got by him and went back to the direction office and sat down in a faint. Everybody said, "What happened now?" I said, "The Boss has offered me to teach in summer session, to teach make-up!" They said, "We told you so! We told you so! He's had his eye on you. He has to see how you operate under pressure and so on." I said, "I can't believe it." That was the beginning of the reversal of my feelings about Drummond. He was doing his thing in his way and you better just trust him.

Riess: Was he an actor?

Wilson: No, he had an A.B. from Hamilton College in upstate New York. I heard him say that he knew a lot about the origins of these small liberal arts colleges. He said once that Harvard, Yale, Hamilton, Colgate, and so on were all pretty much on the same level at one time. Suddenly, Harvard and Yale took off and became complex universities and the others remained.

Wilson: One of his buddies at Hamilton was Alexander Woolcott, both of them Alexes, and they were very close friends. Drummond usually saw Woolcott when he visited New York City. Also, he [Drummond] had been to Harvard and he had an M.A. from Harvard, but never a Ph.D. He probably was like Kittredge at Harvard, who never had a Ph.D. Somebody once asked Kittredge, "Why not?" He chuckled and said, "Who is there who knows enough to give me an exam?" [laughter] Drummond would have said that.

Riess: It sounds like Drummond has no humor?

Wilson: Oh, Drummond does, and that would come out in the informal occasions that would sometimes develop. Now and then in the warm weather time, the word would go out, "Mr. Drummond wants you to come to dinner." That meant he was going to take a group in his car up to some country inn, and he knew them all, and he was an expert on upstate New York history and folklore.

He drove a huge, especially built Lincoln automobile. They didn't call them Lincoln Continentals then; they just called them Lincolns, I think. I guess he had one of the first cars built without a clutch because he had only one good leg, remember, and the thing was automatic, an automatic clutch. It had been especially constructed. I had never heard of one until Drummond.

Well, he'd take us out and we would get going on the stories of students and experiences in the theater. He was a fabulous raconteur and his storytelling was so funny, we would get into gales of laughter with Drummond laughing just as hard as we did. He was an entirely different person--laughing so hard that the food fell out of our mouths while we were doing it! So there was another side to him.

Riess: Did he live alone?

Wilson: Yes, he lived all alone on the campus. The Cornell campus covered many acres, and has not been surrounded by a metropolitan area, so it was able to keep its land, and there were private residences. Drummond had a house right on the campus. That's where the seminar was held.

Riess: How was he tolerated by his peers in the department?

Wilson: With great respect and awe too. He had a tremendous reputation in the academic world of speech and drama because he was one of the real pioneers in establishing academic theater and in making it a very respectable discipline. The older disciplines like English literature all would thumb their noses at dramatic art as being a Johnny-come-lately and really belonging to the English department.

Wilson: It was Drummond at Cornell, along with George Pierce Baker at Harvard and Yale and Koch at North Carolina and so on, who really established the academic reputation of speech and drama in the universities. Also he was close to being Gordon Craig's ideal man of the theater because he could write a play, design the scenery on a few pieces of scratch paper, choose the cast, design the lighting, do everything from the beginning to the end. And he did that. [See discussion in following Chapter VI.]

That first year I was there he wrote an hilarious comedy called The Cardiff Giant. There was another graduate student named Bob Gard who was a very gifted writer. He's established a reputation of his own now. He went to Wisconsin in charge of playwrighting in the experimental theater there. But Bob Gard and Alex Drummond collaborated on this play, The Cardiff Giant, "An Episode in New York State History," one of the great hoaxes pulled on the religious people of that time.

Then the second year they collaborated on another comedy called The Lake Drums of Seneca and Cayuga. There are times when you hear what sounds like drumming coming from the bottom of those lakes and there are all kinds of legends about what causes them, and this was a comedy about them. A lot of the scenes were at the bottom of the lake.

So he was respected for that [writing] and for his great reputation in the field in general. He never published any of his own books. He wrote articles and pamphlets and one of the things he sponsored was little theater groups in rural communities. He wrote the definitive booklet on their problems and how they could stage plays. He was the one who inspired several generations of students with their interest in American theater. Most of the books now in that field have been written by Drummond students. All over the country there are Drummond students.

Riess: Was his method of teaching or his method in general in any way similar to what you had experienced out here from anybody? I mean aside from his own personality.

Wilson: Well, he was far more ruthless and autocratic, and when he directed a play, for example, he would try to get you to perceive what he perceived without telling you, "Now, I want this effect." He would make you repeat and repeat until the illumination came from you inside.

My second year he directed all of the graduate students in Chekhov's The Three Sisters. Now, that's an enormously difficult play. I've come to think of it as kind of a masterpiece, but I've

Wilson: also come to think that American students should stay away from it because to grasp the Russian mentality, the Russian character, their way of doing things and looking at things, is almost impossible. Drummond rehearsed his graduate students for six solid months on that play, almost to the point of madness.

It wasn't until one of the last performances that I suddenly had this flash of illumination about what my character was really supposed to be and what Drummond had been trying to make me see without saying, "You numbskull, can't you see that Kulygin, the kind of pedantic schoolmaster there, was a much wiser person than appears on the surface when he says toward the end of the play, 'Masha is a true, good woman and I love her dearly'--Masha being his wife, who has had an affair with Vershinin, the leading character in the play. I had been playing Kulygin as being this stupid little man who was blind to this and was too wrapped up in his own little narrow pedagogy to see it.

As I was saying those lines in one performance, it suddenly occurred to me that he's not at all stupid. He has been observing this. He's tolerant. He loves his wife. He has been big enough to see this thing through to the end without causing a lot of disturbance. He knew it would end, he knew Masha would come back to him, and he's a much more admirable, understanding character than the kind of funny little pedagogue I had been playing him as. Well, that was the Drummond method.

Riess: That is also the Stanislavsky method, as I understand it very generally.

Wilson: Yes. Well, Drummond's explanation of Stanislavsky is the best I've ever heard. We had to read several of his books and he pointed out how contradictory Stanislavsky was from this book to this book to that book. Oh, in his classes he would make definite statements. But we were discussing why there were these discrepancies and he said, "Well, Stanislavsky, it seems to me, was a first-rate creative artist himself. He spent his lifetime trying to understand the process of creativity in himself, trying to explain it to others, trying to evolve some kind of method so another person could develop his own creativity in the ways that Stanislavsky had developed his through trial and error."

That's the best explanation of Stanislavsky I've ever heard and certainly all of the changing methods that you see...There is so much nonsense talked about the Stanislavsky method. It's simply not true that he encouraged people to be sloppy and to mumble their words and so on. That's a misrepresentation of it. Drummond

Wilson: certainly didn't let you mumble your words and he didn't let you forget your timing. On some occasions he would tell you what you wanted if it was more of a mechanical thing.

His graduate students did It Can't Happen Here, the play made out of the Sinclair Lewis novel about the coming of fascism and tyranny to the U.S.A. I played the part of a hot-headed newspaper editor in this little town where the play is laid. I had to rush into the office of the Gestapo-like character and burst out in rage to him. Drummond said, "No, you have to stand there trying to control your feelings. You can't just rush in and speak your lines." I tried it again. "No, no, you're not taking enough time there. Count three before you speak." Now, this was rare for him to give me a little mechanical thing. So I went out and came back and I thought-counted three. He said, "Did you count three?" I said, "I did, Mr. Drummond. Maybe I did it a little fast."

"Well, let's take a few moments and teach Wilson here how to count one-two-three." And I knew Drummond was in one of his moods and everybody gathered backstage to hear this. "It's very simple"--and he elaborates on this--"to count three. Only one-two-three words in the line and if you articulate them carefully, it will use up a little time: one-two-three." So the actor who is responsible, myself, stands there feeling as though he is completely naked in front of the world. [laughter] But I never forgot how to count to three in the tempo that Drummond wanted me to count three in.

Every now and then he would resort to some kind of a method like this. Otherwise, he was extremely patient and indirect. He could be ruthlessly satiric and so on, but after a while you got to enjoy this, understanding that underneath he had a very, very tender heart. He was protecting himself by this gruff exterior.

I will be forever grateful to him because he enabled me to finish in two years. In addition, I stayed in Cornell two summers, taught two summers. I had time to work on my dissertation the first summer. The second year was mostly devoted to writing the dissertation, and Drummond gave me the lightest possible work load--very little--and I was able to devote all of my time.

Now and then you'd get the royal summons. The phone would ring and the secretary would say, "Mr. Drummond would like to see you." When you got there he'd have six books that you had never heard of and he would say, "Maybe there's something in here you might use." And, of course, the material was right on target, something that you needed to use.

Wilson: When I began the actual writing and I'd finish a chapter, I would type it up, give it to Drummond, and it would be back corrected the next day. I said, "How can he do all of this?" "Well, he has insomnia. He doesn't sleep much at night. He sits up in bed and reads all these papers and then gets it back to you."

With this kind of thing, I got along fairly well, and I'll not forget the day--it was about in February of 1940--that I was taking my luncheon break and I sat there thinking, "I'm getting along quite well in this. Maybe I could be finished by June and not have to stay over the summer working on my dissertation. My God, it's possible!" I set out the time schedule. "It's possible!"

And I did it, through the grace of the Boss, because I had one person on my committee, a very fine English professor named Henry Alonzo Meyer. (He's now dead.) He had the reputation for getting a dissertation and keeping it forever. Well, one of the high points of my academic life was turning in the finished dissertation and getting it back in a few days. I was in the dressing room of the theater and Bob Gard came down with the dissertation and said, "It's all approved. You can send it to the final typing and so on. So you have only the final public oral exam and you'll get your degree in June."

I discovered later that the way they got it past Henry Meyer so fast was that Drummond sent it to him with a little note saying, "Dear Henry, this dissertation has my approval. Will you look it over and have it back to me by such-and-such a date three days hence?" [laughter] Drummond had enough prestige so it got back in three days. So I met all of the deadlines and got my degree on time while all the rest of the graduate students were having to work on their dissertations over the summer and into the fall some of them. My Cornell friends all came to commencement and cheered while I got my degree. Then I spent the summer there teaching and helping out and was completely free of the drudgery of writing every day.

Riess: Do you feel that you were deflected by him from a career that would have been closer actually to theater?

Wilson: Oh no, oh no. As a matter of fact, I had the reward in my second year of being asked to direct the spring week play. On the Cornell campus it's really a long weekend, but they call it Spring Week and there are all kinds of things going on. The Cornell University Theater puts on a play, a special play for that. Sometimes a faculty member directs it, but sometimes a graduate student has the honor of being paid extra to direct it, and I was given that honor. So I was going on as a director. I also directed some one-act plays.

Wilson: I came back to Cal with the feeling that I was going to be in the dramatic arts department and be a director, and that didn't happen. But I was really completely a man of the theater--acting and directing and the technical side. But Drummond was also producing good dissertations in good fields of research and that has been my field of research ever since.

For anybody who didn't know Drummond in his peak years, it's hard to understand how fascinating and unusual a character he was, but you can say that while we were students of his, nobody wanted to talk about anything else. Every time we got together for a cup of coffee or a cocktail at a party, everybody wanted to talk about the Boss, just endlessly, about what he'd said, what he'd done, everything. Now when Drummond's former students get together all we want to talk about is Drummond and reminisce about the Boss. The stories are just legion.

At a national speech and drama convention in Los Angeles (this must be about fifteen years ago now), I was asked to be in charge of the Cornell alumni luncheon. Alumni from various institutions that have specialized in the theater have a special day when they get together for lunch. I had been at several of these lunches and they had visiting speakers and that sort of thing, but I decided in view of the fascination that Drummond had exerted--and then there was Professor Wichelns, not in drama, he was in rhetoric then, but he exerted a kind of fascination--I announced to all the luncheon guests that there was going to be no guest speaker. Each one was going to be called upon for one anecdote about Drummond or Wichelns so we can all enjoy the reminiscences, and that's what the program was. It was enormously successful. They said, "You could not do it again for twenty years," but for one time this made just a delightful program.

Riess: Did people like Baker and Koch have the same kind of reputation of being--

Wilson: I don't know. I don't think so. Whether they were ruthless or not with the students that they thought were promising or whether they were kinder or used a different approach, I don't know. I only know that Drummond was absolutely unique in his own way.

Phonetics and Accents

Wilson: That is not to say that I didn't have some other good teachers there. Henry Meyer was a very fine teacher on the theory of tragedy and theory of comedy and so on. The teacher we had for

Wilson: phonetics, the anatomy of English sounds and so, C.K. Thomas, was first rate. His course in basic phonetics and advanced phonetics tuned my ear to what one is actually hearing, what sounds are actually spoken, distinct from the spelling that you may think you hear. Thus, you can correct what is wrong in speech sounds.

Two years ago a great Warrior basketball player, Rick Barry, came to ask me to give him some lessons because the television people for whom he worked said that he was having trouble with certain sounds and he should go to a good teacher, and somebody said, "See if Wilson will do it for you." Well, he sat there and talked and I listened and as I was listening and hearing I was putting down the three sounds, and when he got through I said, "Did they point out to you what sounds they were?" He said, "Yes"--Rick Barry is a very sharp guy--"the letters you have been writing down on your pad." He was sitting where you are. [opposite Wilson]

I said, "Well, it's very simple. You are dentalizing your t's. Instead of having the tip of your tongue on your gum ridge, you are dropping it down to your teeth. Instead of saying 'tense,' you're saying 'tenth.' Your s's, you're not grooving your tongue to let it come out the tip of your tongue. You're having lateral emission." Now, these are the basic things that Thomas taught us to listen for, and how the speech organs are used to make English sounds and other sounds and so on, so it just becomes automatic when you are directing a play to say, "No, no, you're doing this or that or the other sound; you're nasalizing or denasalizing your vowels, things like that." So I had a lot of other good teachers there.

Riess: Does this have anything to do with local accents?

Wilson: Yes, the advanced course in phonetics had to do with all the regional accents and it was wonderful. We had to analyze two or three people and try to figure out the different influences they had. That was another basic tool for me and it gave me a basic position.

There's a lot of nonsense talked about accents or dialects--and phoneticians use those two words interchangeably--and a lot of so-called good speech teachers say [imitates British accent], "There is only one accent and that is the accent of London and you're a barbarian unless you use a southern British accent." That's absolutely false.

There is a stage accent, and the reason for that is you have to have stage English if you are going to cast a Noel Coward play with people from Scotland, Australia, Boston, Charleston, and San Francisco. You need an accent in common, and that's what's known as stage English.

Riess: Do you think that "finishing school English" might be something--

Wilson: That's right. That's the snooty position, that there is something superior about the south of England accent. Now, the south of England accent is distinguished really by only two or three phonetic changes. They use broad a's in the "ask," "dance," "path" words: ask and dance and path [pronounced as ahsk, dahnce, pahth]. They substitute a final vowel for the final r in words like mother, father, and so on. There are a couple of others, but those are the basic things.

I heard of a teaching assistant in our English department who told his class that "there is only one civilized pronunciation of the word 'mother' and that is 'mothah' [as if ending in a] and only barbarians say 'mother.'" Well, I told this student, "You go back and you take him this little volume which points out that before the middle of the 18th century, everybody pronounced their final r's, in London and so on."

When that substitution of a vowel for the final r came in, there was a great debate, and when it first started to be used it was considered vulgar, only the uneducated used it. Now, a complete circle has been run. The educated people now use it, and Cockneys use it too. Most of the Irish still sound their r's and the north of England never changed. The reason that our own New Englanders dropped their r's is because they were immigrants from the south of England where this shift was already taking place, whereas later waves of immigration came from the north of England. They crossed over the Appalachians and settled in our Middle West and our Far West. They had retained their r's and that's why in General American, which is my accent, the final r is still retained.

It's an historic thing. We actually can say we're using an older form of English pronunciation than "mothah" and "fathah." The same way with the ask-dance-path words, which we say ask, dance, and path [pronounces with short a]. Historically, there is a good reason for the accent of New England, for our Southern accent, and for General American. We have only three basic regional dialects and many, many variations of each of those. But General American is growing rapidly at the expense of the other accents because [in] radio, television, and the motion pictures, General American is what you hear most of the time.

When this discussion ever came up in my speech classes, they'd say, "How can I improve my accent?" By speaking the best brand of your own regional accent. If you're born and reared in the Far West, speak the best brand of the far western accent that you can hear. What is it? Well, it's spoken by educated, well-read, well-traveled people. That's the only guide you can have. But it doesn't do you any good if you were born in San Francisco to speak like a Bostonian or like somebody from Charleston. It's just silly.

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Wilson: Carter, before his first campaign, worked long and hard with a speech teacher to get rid of some of the most glaring marks of his true southern Georgia accent.

Riess: Oh?

Wilson: Oh, yes, his present accent is much more cultivated, I am told, than what he had before. So you improve your accent by speaking the best type of your own regional accent. Flat a's are bad if they're nasalized--"ask" and "dance" and "pass" [a pronounced with nasalized a] and diphthongized--and r's are ugly if they're over-pronounced, ground out "mother-rr" or "father-rr," but that doesn't mean that a flat a, nicely pronounced, or an r lightly pronounced is not just as good.

This is one of my phobias. When somebody with a finishing school accent starts to say, "Oh, the r's are so ugly," I say, "Will you read this sentence to me: 'Round the rock the rugged rascal ran.'" The person reads it. I say, "How many r's are in that sentence? If it's ugly at the end, isn't it ugly at the beginning? You're pronouncing it, you know: round the rock the rugged rascal ran." "Oh, but it's not the same thing!" "Phonetically it is." So don't give me that business that it's unpleasant. It's unpleasant if it's ground out too much, but don't give me the thing that there's something more elegant in a south of England accent. For elegance how about--

Well, anyway, this is not supposed to be a lecture on speech. The point is that I had some other very good teachers at Cornell.

Riess: Did you make your way down to Broadway and the bright lights while you were in the East?

Wilson: Oh, as often as we could get away, and we gluttoned ourselves with plays. Things were reasonable then and we didn't spend anything on living quarters. The men stayed at the YMCA, the Sloane House--we called it "Slum House." We could get a cubicle for 75¢. We spent all of our money on plays. Then we went back. My most memorable weekend in New York was the weekend after I had got my degree and before summer session started at Cornell and I was completely free. Ah, what a glorious feeling that was!

The "Last Exam"

Wilson: This is backtracking a little bit. But among graduate students there is sort of a superstition that the last thing you study at night before your final oral is the first thing you will be asked. Well, this is almost literally true in my case.

The night before my exam I had gone to a movie to relax. Then I went home and went to bed. As I lay there in bed I thought to myself, "I haven't reviewed Bergson's theory of laughter"--that's one of the basic texts in the theory of comedy; he has a book on the theory of laughter--"I haven't reviewed that for a long time. I don't remember that very well." I thought, "I better not risk it." So I got up, found the notes--I had taken complete notes when I read the book--put it on top of my desk, and got up thirty minutes earlier than I had planned to get up and went through it. The second question I was asked in that exam was, "Mr. Wilson, who was Bergson?" I said, "He was the Frenchman who wrote a book on the theory of laughter." "Will you tell us what his theory is?" It rolled off my tongue with only the freshness it would have when you had just looked at it an hour before. So the exam, I thought, went very well.

When the three hours were over the exam committee said, "Go wait in the hall." There were my friends, waiting. As time went by, I got nervous. But then they called me in and they said, "Congratulations." I learned later that they passed me right off the bat, except "let him stew out in the hall a little while, we don't want him to get too cocky about this!" So they had smoked cigarettes and had another cup of coffee and talked about various other things while I paced the corridor out waiting for them.

But one of the things I said, and I hope that younger people will take a lesson from this, was, "I'm free now. I've had my last exam. No more! There's no more to take!" About a year and a half later I was drafted into the Army and went to three different Army schools and did nothing but take exam after exam after exam! [laughter] So I never say you're finished taking exams.

Riess: You stayed there for the summer. You had this job. But then you also had a job waiting for you--

Wilson: Oh, yes, back at Humboldt State. I went back there for a year as "Dr. Wilson" and then it was toward the end of the spring of '41 that I got an invitation from Gerry Marsh, head of the speech department here, to come and teach, and a formal letter from the provost and vice-president, Monroe Deutsch. Of course, I had

Wilson: committed myself to getting a Ph.D. as the entrée to a first-rate university, so obviously I jumped at the chance, came down to Cal in August of 1941, started teaching in the speech department, not in dramatic art which had been founded then. (But as I think I told you before, Deutsch asked me which department I would prefer, and it was because of my loyalty to Gerry Marsh that I said, "He's invited me, I better stick with that." I'm not sure whether that was a wise decision or not. But anyway, that was the decision.)

Later, Fred Harris, chairman of dramatic art, asked me to teach a course once a year on the history of the American theater because I obviously knew more than anybody else here [laughter], and then I taught a seminar now and then in studies in the American theater. For a while I had a joint appointment between speech and dramatic arts.

I started out in speech in 1941 and since we were on the beautiful old Berkeley calendar then, the semester system, I started in August. You are well aware of what happened on December 7, 1941, at the end of my first semester teaching here. December 7 was a Sunday and I had a final exam to give on the 8th. It was quite upsetting for the students to have to take an exam, especially for a young lady whose home was in Honolulu. At that time nobody knew how much damage had been done to the city, to the fleet, to everything else.

I was allowed to stay and finish out the school term, and I had been invited back to Humboldt State to teach the summer session, and I badly needed the money, and my draft board allowed me to do that.

V THE WAR YEARS

Training

Wilson: Then when the summer was over I was drafted as a buck private and went into the Army.

Riess: Despite ROTC?

Wilson: Despite the ROTC, which hadn't done me any good because I didn't take upper division, although it was serviceable now and then in the Army.

My Army career is amazing. I was inducted into the Army at the Presidio in Monterey as a buck private, immediately shipped by train clear across the country to St. Petersburg, Florida, where I found myself in the then Army Air Corps. We had basic training in St. Petersburg, then I was put onto another train and sent to Oklahoma A & M College (it's now Oklahoma State University) in Stillwater, Oklahoma, for an Air Corps administrative school. There I was taught to be some kind of an Air Force clerk. Then from Stillwater I was sent to a placement depot in Salt Lake City. Then I was sent to a heavy bombardment squadron at Biggs Field outside of El Paso, Texas.

Here I decided to do what I said I would never do. I decided I would apply for OCS [Officer Candidate School]. I went in with a romantic notion that it would be great to be a private without any responsibilities. I discovered that I was taking too many orders from my inferiors. That was the hardest thing I had to do in the Army. [laughter] In my teaching that first year at Cal, I would look at the class and say, "They tell me that you are the upper two percent of the population. You are the cream of the country. If this is the case, God help the country!"

Wilson: Well, when I was a buck private and had to drill, eat, sleep, shower, work, converse, and play with Mr. American, I found that college men were the upper two percent of the country! [laughter] And that they had so much more to say than the average American. Now, I don't want to under-rate them. Average Mr. American, the average young man who is not of college caliber, has wonderful strengths and ingenuity and courage and loyalty, all kinds of virtues, but very limited interests. They will argue over a question of fact when all they have to do is look in a book. They look down on symphony music and enjoy monkey music and they're just limited in their development as people. I decided I didn't want to spend the war with this kind.

Well, who are the interesting guys? In the Air Force, the Air Corps, it was all of the pilots, the young pilots, the young officers, the administrative officers. They were all college men. When I applied for OCS, the captain who was head of this heavy bombardment squadron had a very aristocratic name, Philip Ardery. He had an A.B. from an Ivy League college (I've forgotten which) and he had a law degree too. But he had seen the war coming and he had immediately gone to March Field and became a pilot and was now a captain, and what a fine person!

I had to be interviewed to get his recommendation for application to OCS. He had me sit down and put me at ease. He said, "At ease, at ease, Wilson. Relax, don't hold the pose there." He looked at my record and said, "My God, nobody told me I had a Phi Beta Kappa Ph.D. in my squadron!" After that, he just sat and talked and asked about Cal and about Cornell and told me his background. I didn't know how he was going to rate me.

The next day the sergeant of the squadron said, "You certainly must have captivated Captain Ardery." I said, "How do you mean?" He said, "He's given you outstanding in every trait right from beginning to end!" I said, "How could he know it? Wasn't there one on the order of 'capacity as a foot soldier'?" He said, "Yes, it's 'outstanding'." [laughter]

Then I had to be interviewed by a board of officers which gives you an oral interview. I will never forget that because there I discovered the truth of a principle I learned in psychology one day here at Cal from old Professor Stratton, and that is that the mind stores and remembers everything you ever learn. It loses the power to recall except under certain circumstances. Stratton used to tell the class about people who were under the influence of an anesthetic and suddenly things would come out, or under hypnosis, things would come out that they had stored in their mind.

Wilson: So my interview with this board of officers--they were sitting on a raised platform behind a table, five of them, all field grade officers. Then the candidate comes in. Me. You sit down on a straight chair and you sit at attention: your arms forward, head high, your feet apart, your knees apart. They say, "At ease," and then you can put your arms down at your side, but you are at attention the whole time. Their technique--of course, I felt I had an advantage over a lot of these candidates [laughter] because I had gone through oral exams for both the master's degree and a Ph.D.

Well, they start out very gently and rather companionably talking about your background--where you had been to college and all and what you had done in your civilian life and so on. Then suddenly, one major leaned over and said to me, "Wilson, do you think Nero fiddled while Rome burned?" This question suddenly out of the clear blue without any indication something like that was coming! Then I heard myself saying, "No sir, not fiddled because they didn't have fiddles"--which was a slang word for violin then--"but probably he did strum a harp or a lute or a string instrument then. There is the German archeologist Weigal, who wrote a book on Nero, and he spends a chapter toward the end of the book on that myth about Nero strumming. He points out that Nero used to join the minstrel contests, reciting and strumming on this instrument. But when the fire broke out, Nero was at the port of Ostia and came back and watched the fire on one of the hills and it's very likely that since he was kind of a show-off he picked up his string instrument and played it and wailed to it and that, says Weigal, was maybe the beginning of the legend that he fiddled while Rome burned."

As I was saying this, I was thinking, "I had forgotten I ever read that book. If you had asked me the name of the author, I couldn't have named him," but this sudden question out of the blue released what was stored up in the computer in [my] head and I couldn't believe myself really saying that. Neither could the board because they leaned back and laughed and one of them said, "Well, no wonder you have a Ph.D. backing your name with all that coming out!" After that the questions were easy and more friendly and more back and forth, and I had discovered from the Ph.D. exam that you lead the questioners by dropping a hint in one answer as to another, to the next question, and they suddenly leap on that: "What do you mean by such-and-such a thing?" "What's that reference from?" and so on, so it got to be kind of a game--

Riess: What were they after with the first question?

Wilson: I think you could have answered it satisfactorily in any way so long as you didn't get flustered. I think they wanted to see whether you would say, "Well, I have heard the legend. I don't know where it came from and so on and so on." But I think this board obviously didn't expect this flood of material.

Riess: It's a wonderful watershed question.

Wilson: Yes, but they just wanted to see whether you'd flounder, whether you'd be flustered, whether you could handle it, and in what fashion you would handle it, and I answered it in a true way a scholar would answer it.

So I was accepted for OCS, and it immediately made it impossible for me to stay with this heavy bombardment squadron which was preparing for overseas duty and didn't want somebody there who was going to be transferred out just when they were ready to go overseas. I was then sent to a more temporary post at Davis-Monthon Field, and that's in Arizona, where I waited my call to OCS.

To my amazement I got summoned to Ordnance Officer Candidate School at Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland--I had expected to go to an Air Force or Air Corps administrative school. There I spent thirteen weeks of grueling training. You were up at five and lights out were at eleven, but if you had something to do, why, you took your books somewhere--down to the latrine was the only place that had lights on.

I was commissioned then a second lieutenant and assigned to stay at Aberdeen Proving Ground under a major, to be his aide. He was in Washington a lot of the time and after I had been with him a couple of months I heard of a new ordnance battalion being activated in Texas and I wanted to be with active troops, not at headquarters. I asked to be assigned to that and the major was a nice guy and said, "I'd like to keep you and you probably would get promoted faster with me, but if you want this I can understand it."

So I was assigned to the 142nd Ordnance Battalion, which was activated at Texarkana, Texas, which is right on the Texas-Arkansas border. I was, I guess, the first officer assigned there. Then they assigned what they call a cadre. They pick out noncommissioned officers from other ordnance battalions who have had experience to form the nucleus and they assign other officers from other ordnance battalions who have had experience.

Oh, I left out a great chunk! How did I happen to go into an ordnance battalion when I had been trained as an artillery specialist in Army school? When I came up before the assignment officer at Aberdeen Proving Ground, he looked over the records apparently for the first time and said, "Wilson, what the hell are you doing in ordnance with a Ph.D. in drama and theater and all of that English background?" I said plaintively, "Well, I've been trying to get somebody to explain this ever since I've been here!" He said,

Wilson: "You belong in the Adjutant General's School," which is the general administrative branch. I said, "No, I've sweated out this artillery specialty. I can field strip and operate a 145 howitzer under fire. Now I want to do it." "Well, if that's how you feel. I think it's wrong, but I will find you a billet there."

Well, in a few days he called me in and said, "I've got just the place for you." "What?" "A place in the Adjutant General's School." I said, "Oh, no! I'm tired of schools!" He said, "You will thank me for it in the long run." So I went to the Adjutant General's School at Fort Washington outside of Washington, D.C. (Fort Washington is not very proud of its historical reputation because it was the fort which was supposed to defend the Capitol right on the Potomac River. But instead the British got through and that's when they burned the Capitol and so Fort Washington doesn't brag about its part in the War of 1812.) Anyway, we had two months of special training in the Adjutant General's School. It was in the fall. Congress wasn't in session. Washington, D.C. was sort of enjoying this nice golden autumnal season. We could get rooms in the hotels there whenever we'd get off for a weekend from camp and I remember it with a good deal of pleasure. We were all officers in this school.

It was after that I went back to Aberdeen Proving Ground and worked for the major. Then I was assigned to this new battalion, the 142nd, and was there while the battalion formed and while all the recruits came in and they got their basic training. From Texarkana, Texas, after basic training, we were moved to the Pomona Fairgrounds, which was now an ordnance base for technical training. The battalion had not yet acquired all of the equipment we had to use, but that was a nice period in Pomona, California. We had technical training. My sisters and parents were in Los Angeles, so I could go home on weekends. But from Pomona it took three trains to move us.

We were moved for final advanced technical training to the Mississippi Ordnance Base outside of Jackson, Mississippi, and I found myself close to the capital, Jackson, which was a nice place really. From Jackson, Mississippi, then we were ready for staging--all this time we had been preparing for overseas movement.

We were moved up to Camp Shanks, New York, which was a final staging area for overseas movement. After final checkouts there we were put on ferry boats and moved down to the Port of Brooklyn, loaded onto a transport, an old cruise ship that had been altered to be a troop transport, and went in a small convoy across the Atlantic to the Mediterranean and landed at Marseilles, France.

Overseas

Riess: When were you there?

Wilson: We left in late October or early November in 1943. There were about five ships in this whole convoy. We had a destroyer escort all the way across. The planes then couldn't fly very far. The gasoline range was very brief. They couldn't escort you clear across the ocean so we had air cover for a few hundred miles and then they had to turn back. But we got through safely. We had one submarine alert, I remember.

Of course, super, super caution was taken. The ship ran without lights and anytime you went up on the deck for airing you wore your weapon, your life jacket, your helmet. You never left your compartment without those. We had one alert when the destroyer escort went crazy, circling around dropping depth charges all around.

We went through Gibraltar, pitch black at night, and we finally landed at Marseilles. The harbor at Marseilles was a terrible wreck. It had been bombed heavily by the Allies and the Germans too. We bivouacked outside of Marseilles on a rocky plateau, and had another alarm that night. We were sleeping in shelter halves (pup tents) on the plateau. A jeep came through with a siren going and said, "Enemy planes approaching." It turned out to be one or two, probably scouting planes. We had next to us a new anti-aircraft battalion that had just landed. [laughter] They were waiting to go up the Rhone Valley and so they got out their guns and ammunition and started whacking away! We remembered our battle training. What do you do? You dig a foxhole, but the plateau was solid rock. There was no place to dig. So there was nothing to do but wait.

I think back on it now with some amusement because we had one private in our battalion whose name was Purvis--his last name was Purvis--and he got very excited and came running around. Most of the other men immediately had the same reaction I did--lying rolled up in a blanket on the ground. Well, you dig a hole or you find shelter. But there was no shelter and there was no place to dig a hole, so you just laid there. But Purvis ran around shouting, "Get up, you guys! Get up, you guys! Do something! Do you want to be killed in your sacks?" From that came the immortal phrase that "Purvis is nervous in the service." [laughter] But nothing happened.

We eventually moved up the Rhone Valley following the Seventh Army and were stationed in the little town of Langres. A French town. (But the G.I.'s, of course, pronounced it Lăn'grēs.) It was

Wilson: between Dijon and Nancy, and we were quartered in an old barracks on the outskirts of the town and set up our own headquarters there. We were there through November, December, January, and the Battle of the Bulge. Many front-line troops were being pulled back. We were behind the lines.

I'll never forget the despair of the French people in the village. They thought that the Germans were coming again. The Germans had stripped that village as they had stripped every village when it was liberated. They took everything with them. For example, there was a little public bath house in the village. There was no coal for any general usage there. It was the coldest winter France had had for thirty years. (My mother, incidentally, felt personally insulted by that: "You would think those French people could do better than that!" [laughter] as if the French weren't suffering.)

Once a week the Army provided coal for the bath house because the troops had to bathe once in a while. So I would go in with some other officers and sometimes march a squad of men in and have brief showers and I got to know the owner and his wife very well. They were charming people. We always had to bring our towels and I very early said, "Why don't you have towels?" "The Germans took all of the towels. They took all the soap. They took all of the equipment that was transportable. Everything, they just cleaned us out." If you would go into the town to buy a bottle of wine, why, you [only] could get wine if you had a bottle to exchange because the Germans had taken all of the bottles too.

We were there during the Battle of the Bulge and everybody slept in his clothes with weapons by your side. We usually didn't keep our weapons on our desks there, but during a double alert we did. But the German thrust was contained and the French, terrified at being occupied by the Germans again, heaved a sigh of relief.

That was the last offensive of the war. We knew that the war was being won and winding down, and the big breakthroughs started to come and in about April when it was pretty sure that Germany was collapsing was when we decided that they had to arrange for the troops to do something before they could be either sent to Pacific theater or sent home. (That's when they set up the school in Paris that I attended for a week.) [see p. 130]

But we didn't have any time to practice any of the things I had learned there [in Paris] because three days after V-E day we were alerted for movement directly to the Pacific because we had not been in the European theater for a year yet. So our whole battalion was alerted and we sent home the men that had enough points--the point system was announced then. The rest of us were hurried back to the port of Marseilles to an unfinished replacement depot then.

Wilson: We knew the area very well. [laughter] It was the same area where we landed. We rushed down there in "40 & 8's," those famous little freight cars which were notorious in the First World War. They held forty men, and the doughboys of the First World War dubbed them "40 & 8's" because they held forty men and eight horses.

Incidentally, it was very strange--almost spooky--to be reliving and redoing things that I know had been done in the First World War. I was old enough to have remembered those movies of the First World War, like All Quiet on the Western Front, The Big Parade--there were many movies. One scene that I always remember was the scene of triumph on Armistice Day with the troops parading and the French people throwing flowers and kisses and treating the G.I.'s to wine. Well, that happened to us.

In my battalion, which was on the outskirts of this little town of Langres, the French got the word of the German surrender before we did. The officers had all been called together the night before and said that it could come anytime tomorrow, so be prepared. "We'll let the guys whoop it up then."

That morning the French had gotten the news. Their high command had announced it. One of the most touching scenes that I can recall from being in France was [when] all the school children--the toddlers, that is--the school children were organized and marched out to our headquarters there (of the G.I.'s) with little bouquets of flowers. All of the troops poured out and they marched around this quadrangle. The children were handing the American troops these flowers and singing their version [laughter] of an American song. It was very touching, very cute.

Riess: In that location you really felt in the war.

Wilson: Oh, that's right. We were close enough that we got a battle star, although we were not front-line troops by any means. We just supplied them.

Then I'll always remember, we huddled around the Army radio station to hear Winston Churchill, who announced it in this wonderful growling voice in the simplest possible statement. His rhetoric had been so wonderful to inspire and to keep people's courage up during the war that it was right, he should not try to say anything fancy. As I recall, he simply said [lowers voice to imitate Churchill], "This morning in a school house in Rheims, France, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the supreme commander, received unconditional surrender from the German high command. Rule Britannia, God save the King!" And that was all.

Wilson: Then the celebration began. Everything closed up. Everybody it seemed had stored away a little liquor of some kind for this moment. [laughter] Everybody fraternized, and the townspeople came in and fraternized, and we spent the afternoon and the evening going through the town. Then all of the pretty girls were on the street of this little village, and the G.I.'s lined up to kiss them. Everybody was passing around a bottle of wine and it was a great, wonderful orgy!

Then the word came out that all of the troops, both the French troops stationed there and the American troops, would have a victory parade tomorrow morning at 0900 hours. Oh! It was some wobbly guys that did the parade the next morning! [laughter] But they were all there, a little green around the gills. We found ourselves marching through a French village, cobblestone streets, with the flags of France and the United States flying and everybody hanging out windows and waving and cheering, and I said to myself, "This can't be happening to me. This is a scene from another Class B movie! I've seen it many times."

However, three days later we said, "It was a short peace, wasn't it?" Because we were alerted to move directly to the Pacific.

Well, it's five after three and I must go.

Riess: And I must go too. That was excellent. Thank you.

V-J Day and After##

[Interview 5: March 27, 1980]

Wilson: That voyage from Marseilles, France to the Philippines was the longest voyage I ever expect to take. We could not take the short route of the Indian Ocean because it was infested with Japanese submarines. So we had to go through the Mediterranean, across the Atlantic, through the Panama Canal, and across the Pacific. It took forty-five days on a ship that had been built for a troop ship--there were no portholes.

We left, five thousand troops, in the middle of July, a hot month, and traveled in August, a hot month. When we first got on the ship the captain called all of the officers together and said, "Your men will be so hot they will think they are going to die. We've made this trip before in this weather, and we haven't lost a man yet." [laughter]

Riess: To be snatched from all of the joy of victory and being stuck into this ship must have been--

Wilson: Yes, it was an amazing experience. Then V-J Day (victory over Japan day) found us one day outside of Ulithi, and I'll never forget the suddenness of it because before we left France the great topic of conversation was how long the war in the Pacific would last. The most optimistic estimate was two years, the most pessimistic was ten years. They felt that to conquer Japan it would take house-to-house fighting in practically every city. But the news of the atom bomb--the dropping of the atom bomb--came while we were on this forty-five-day voyage. What it meant was not made clear, you just had a brief announcement that a strange, terrific new bomb had been dropped.

One morning myself, and as many bodies as could squeeze into this little shady space--the captain's bridge cast a shadow up on the top deck and you could lie there in the shadow and you got a little breeze--we were lying elbow to elbow in the shadow and suddenly the ship's P.A. system came on and a voice said, "Now hear this, now hear this, Captain So-and-So has an announcement. First all hands will rise and uncover." (That means you rise and take off your hat if you had one on.) We looked at each other wondering what's going to happen? We staggered to our feet and stood there.

The captain of the ship came on and in a most terse, business-like announcement [said], "This morning at such-and-such an hour in Washington, D.C., President Harry S. Truman announced that the Japanese have surrendered unconditionally. The war is over." That was the end of the announcement. Stunned silence. And then started the shouting in various parts of the ship. We were sure that by the time we reached Ulithi the next day, there would be orders turning the ship around and sending us back to San Francisco.

Riess: What is this place, Ulithi?

Wilson: Ulithi is an atoll way, way out in the Pacific.

When we got there the next day there wasn't any such order. The order was to proceed to the Philippines, which we did. Of course, the ship celebrated that day to the extent possible on a ship in the middle of the Pacific. We proceeded to the Philippines. We were bivouacked in a little rice paddy some miles outside of Manila. There I left my ordnance battalion because I had received an offer of a job at higher headquarters in Japan which would mean a promotion. I had been frozen in a job with the ordnance battalion and offered no promotion.

Wilson: So I left the battalion, took a ship for Japan, arrived there, and was assigned as assistant adjutant general in the headquarters of the Eighth Army. Its headquarters were in Yokohama. I was there until December (this is 1945) and there was an urgent cable from Washington that ordered my immediate release--processing for a release--and return home.

I didn't know how in the world that had happened because men were released according to the number of points they had. The points were determined by how long you had been in the service, whether you were married, how many children you had, what hazardous duty you had performed and so on, and I didn't have points enough at that time. Here came this telegram from Washington to the headquarters of the Eighth Army ordering me released and sent to a replacement depot to wait for a ship.

I didn't know what had happened until I got home and my mother said, "Well, I know how it happened. I wrote to Senator Downey, our senator from California. He's on the Armed Services Committee and I said that you were a college professor, you had a Ph.D., you had done your duty during the past four years, and now it was time you got home. The university needed you more than the Army needs you now that peace had come. And I got a telegram right back saying he would see to it. That's how you got released!" [laughter] So mothers can be helpful at times, even though they're buttinskys!

So I got back in January of 1946.

Riess: Do you have any memories of that post-bomb period in Japan?

Wilson: There was not much talk in the Tokyo-Yokohama area where I was about the bomb, but a thing that impressed me was the complete impoverishment of the Japanese people at that time. Most of us felt the bomb was not necessary. It gave them face for surrendering, but they were utterly exhausted. The people were ragged. Yokohama and Tokyo had been burned out. The cities largely were originally wood and paper. Only a few stone buildings were remaining in Yokohama. The Eighth Army headquarters was in one of them and we were billeted in the old Mitsubishi Shipyard Building, which was a stone building. They had no food, no supplies, and I think no possibility of anything.

Riess: But no system of surrender apparently.

Wilson: That's right. I think our intelligence must have been very bad for not informing the President of the United States and all the heads of state that Japan could not continue fighting, because they simply did not have the wherewithal to.

Riess: So diplomatically it should have been settled.

Wilson: Yes, yes, and I don't think the atom bomb was necessary had we known this--and why shouldn't we have known it anyway? It puzzles me to this day. One of the saddest things that I remember was the lines of hungry, ragged Japanese waiting at the garbage cans outside the Army mess halls. In the Army system you got your food on a tin tray, and you ate what you wanted, and you learned to take more than you would eat because by each garbage can was a line of Japanese and they had to take the tray of the next person who came to the garbage can. They had to take what was left. If you had eaten all, that person didn't get anything to eat then. He lost his turn. He couldn't wait for someone who had left something. But these patient, humble people waiting for the scraps--you quickly learned not to eat everything, so you could give something to your Japanese customer who was waiting.

Riess: So you weren't conditioned to hate the Japanese then?

Wilson: No. When we got into Yokohama Harbor and the Japanese pilot came on board there was a great feeling of unease among the G.I.'s and officers and men because here was the enemy and he was going to pilot us into the harbor. After we landed the first thing we did was check in and surrender our weapons which we had carried all of the time for years and we thought, "This is madness! Why, we won't be safe at all. What if Japan had conquered San Francisco and a contingent of Japanese soldiers was landing in San Francisco? There would be murder in every doorway!" That's what we thought. But that did not happen.

The Japanese had been told to fight, they fought, they had been told to surrender, and they surrendered. So far as I know, there wasn't a single incident of violence or sabotage or theft from the American troops. They just gave the impression of this tenacious but obedient, humble people, and we quickly started to sympathize with them.

Riess: You had known Japanese here in the Bay Area. But probably a lot of the men had never seen Japanese before.

Wilson: Yes, but we had known Germans here before too. But there was no feeling of sympathy for the Germans because our attitude was that Germany had been part of the Western world, and the German people knowingly followed Hitler, and fought to conquer the world, whereas the Japanese had been under a feudal regime. They didn't know what the rest of the world was saying, thinking, or doing. They were

Wilson: obedient to their leaders, especially to the emperor, the son of heaven, and so they fought in ignorance of the rest of the world and its opinion of them, and we did not feel the same enmity. I didn't feel any enmity at all. I thought they were an admirable people and very pitiable from what they had to suffer. Now, of course, they are more prosperous or as prosperous as the U.S.A.

VI EARLY THEATER WORK AT BERKELEY

Sam Hume##

Wilson: I didn't know Sam Hume personally until his return to Berkeley late in life in the last few years before he died, but I had known about his influence on the American theater ever since I became interested in it myself because he was the American who went to Europe and studied with one of the seminal people in what I call the modern American theatrical renaissance, Gordon Craig, the Englishman. He studied personally with Gordon Craig and brought back to the United States Craig's revolutionary ideas about theater, about scenery, about lighting, about everything.

Gordon Craig thought that the theater of the 19th century was obsolete and that we needed a completely new concept of plays, of acting, of scenery, of lighting, and so on. Craig and Adolphe Appia, the Swiss, are the two real pioneers of the modern theater.

Craig had ideas about every aspect of the theater. One of the paradoxes he pointed out is that since there are so many artists contributing to a final production of a play, it could never have the unity of concept or of design or of completion that a painting has, for example, where the painter himself conceives the painting, executes it, does everything from start to finish, and it's his product. But in the theater of the 19th century and in the theater today, although we've made some progress here, you often had separate artists with different ideas about what the play should be competing with each other and so what you often got was a mishmash.

Craig carried his ideas along to the point where he said, "The real man of the theater has to be one who can write the play, direct the play, design the lighting, the costumes, the scenery, see it from beginning to end, see the thing through as a whole." Finally,

Wilson: he went a step further and said, "Since actors are subject to all human vicissitudes and change from performance to performance, we should do away with actors. We should have these plays produced with super marionettes." So one artist could even control the acting through the super marionettes, who had to obey exactly what the super artist did.

These books came out in the beginning of 1905, one or two at a time, but they were tremendously exciting for everybody in the theater. They had people all over the world rethinking their old concepts. Of course, the time was right because the theater of the 19th century had gone to seed as it were. It had outlived its own conventions, its own traditions, and so on. We needed a revolution and Craig and Appia started that.

This young Berkeley student, Sam Hume, had been here at least three years. One of the first English Club plays was Merry Wives of Windsor, in which Sam Hume played Falstaff. He was a vital force in the early English Club plays. He went to Harvard and from there he went to Italy and studied with Gordon Craig. Then he came back to this country and it seems to me he joined the Detroit Arts Theater. There he exhibited--I think for the first time in America--the designs of Gordon Craig and the lighting ideas of Appia and also he was full of Craig's ideas about theater in general.

How long he was in Detroit I don't know, but then he was brought back to Berkeley as director of the Greek Theater. His wasn't a long tenure, but evidently it was a very exciting time for the Berkeley theater because here you had this dynamo with an original mind and with all kinds of energy and creativity taking over almost all dramatic activity on the campus, although his title was director of the Greek Theater.

Riess: He came back to direct the Greek Theater in 1918, and in 1924 he would have left. That was when President William Wallace Campbell came in.

Wilson: Well, it was a brief period in there and a very fertile period. But when you have a strong personality like Sam Hume, why, you arouse a lot of enmity, I'm sure, and since he was the aesthetic dictator, there was a lot of opposition to him. I wasn't around at that time. As you know, I didn't get here until 1926, but there was still a lot of talk about Sam Hume and the great plays in the Greek Theater and what had happened.

A bit of later gossip was that Robert Gordon Sproul said, after he was selected to be president, "If there's one thing I'm going to do it's to bring Sam Hume back here and put him in charge of the theater." That was only gossip, as I said. I never authenticated

Wilson: it. But at any rate, Sam never came back to Berkeley, nor did the other very lively theater people and actors that he gathered around him. I guess he took over the English Club plays too, because when I became connected with the English Club in the spring of 1931 their dramatic activity had ceased and my great contribution as president was to revive the English Club plays, and that we did in the spring of '32 when Charles D. von Neumayer, who was the professor of dramatic art in the public speaking department, was hired to direct The Bacchae of Euripides. The following year Everett Glass was hired to direct The Thesmophoriazusae of Aristophanes, which we advertised as The Trial of Euripides.

I was at Humboldt State the following year, but I know they did The Birds of Aristophanes in 1934. Beyond that, the English Club plays seem to have vanished again.

Riess: That's interesting. Kenneth McGowan said in 1929 that the Greek Theater "was a great, vacant monument to Sam Hume's work while the sporadic college dramatics of the gigantic University of California, unblest by official cooperation, go on upon the platform of Wheeler Hall."

Wilson: Yes, that's right. The Little Theater was an activity of the Associated Students just as debating had been. The Associated Students hired the director and they produced their plays mostly in Wheeler. After the International House was built in 1930, it had an auditorium with a flat floor, but it did have a stage and they tried that for a couple of years. But it wasn't satisfactory, so they went back to Wheeler.

There was a period of very little activity, although I remember in 1928 seeing a production of Antigone in the Greek Theater with Margaret Anglin as the star. That was directed by von Neumayer. He now and then would get the backing to hire an artist and direct a play. I remember it was a stunning production. It was the first Greek play I had ever seen.

Riess: In the cast were Everett Glass and Irving Pichel.

Wilson: That's right. Irving Pichel played Creon and Everett Glass played Teiresias and Margaret Anglin, of course, was Antigone. I was really captivated and almost transfigured by that production. I had never realized that a Greek play, even in translation, in the right city and with the right performers, could enthrall a person as much as that did. The whole audience was enthralled.

Riess: Was the Greek Theater used then for other things in that period?

Wilson: Yes, often the Senior Extravaganza was given up there. We had occasional university meetings. We had Charter anniversary exercises there. Let's see, it had been used for commencement until commencement became so large they moved it to the stadium. But then when Robert Sproul became president, his first commencement was in the stadium because the first commencement over which he presided was in 1931 when I got my degree when I was the student speaker. I remember that vividly.

By 1933, when I got my M.A., Sproul had decided that the stadium was too big and formal and there wasn't any chance to give any personal attention to the graduates. He tried a few years there splitting up the commencement into an undergraduate commencement and a graduate commencement and putting each in the Greek Theater. But what happened is the undergraduate commencement overflowed the theater. The graduate commencement didn't draw anybody. (I didn't even go to my commencement in 1933 to get a master's degree.) Finally, I don't know what year, they moved back to the stadium. So the Greek Theater had quite a bit going on--rallies and so on. But the dramatic activity was very sporadic, very occasional.

One Revolution of Bohemianism

Wilson: By the time I knew Sam in the 1950s, he had come back and opened his book shop. He was an impressive figure with a beard. In those days in the fifties, beards weren't as common as they are now. I met him and talked with him several times and like everybody was fascinated by his personality, by his iconoclasm is it? He was still a rebel. He was still questioning and disputing the way things were done all over, and still full of ideas.

Riess: Not just in the theater then?

Wilson: No, that was his approach. I was at that time giving a course in the history of the American theater in the dramatic art department. We held it in what is now the Durham Studio Theater and Sam Hume was a part of the course. I invited him once to come and talk to the class, which he did. They thought he was great because he was such a stimulating breaker of icons and whatnot.

Riess: Would you call him a Bohemian?

Wilson: It's curious. Perhaps in the early 1920s there was a Bohemian revolution in Berkeley that had its repercussions and then the reaction, the counter-revolution, because when I got here in the late 1920s it was talked about, but I wasn't aware of any real activity along those lines.

Wilson: Of course, you must recall I was seventeen years old. I had come from a Mormon community in Utah. I wouldn't have understood what Bohemianism is anyway! [laughter] I would probably have been completely untouched even though it was rampant, but it seems to me there was an interesting parallel then in the sixties where you had the political revolution on the campus. Berkeley is supposed to have started it and inflamed the whole world and now we're having the counter-revolution. It's quiescent and students are conservative again and back to the traditions. Maybe that's the nature of a university, to erupt in all kinds of exciting fashions and then subside, and there is a period of quiescence and then another kind of an eruption takes place.

Riess: It happens at a student level rather than faculty. The faculty probably go on teaching the same things, but the students--

Wilson: Yes, but they do make adjustments though, and during the period of the late sixties I know I adjusted the way I taught courses quite considerably. There are faculty--I couldn't call them eruptions--but certainly after the cyclotron was invented by E.O. Lawrence, after they had started to split atoms, and after Seaborg and McMillan and all of them started to discover all of these new elements, there was a real revolution in physics and in the whole scientific establishment all over the world with these remarkable new discoveries. I don't know whether the students were much affected by that, but the world of science--

Riess: But it seems to me that it's the students that keep bringing the values issues to a head. I wonder whether the faculty's general value system changes--

Wilson: The younger faculty, to judge from the sixties, then side with, identify with, students. The older faculty members tend to be conservative and retain their old values and make smaller adjustments to the students. A little adjustment, for example: in my first teaching years it was a policy in the classroom to call students by their last names--Mr. McGillacuddy, Miss Jamison, and so on. Our feeling then was that they had come from being mollycoddled in high school, now they've got to feel that they're adults, they've got to be given the dignity of being called Mr. So-and-So and Miss So-and-So and Mrs. So-and-So in the classroom and not called Joe and Sally and Bill and all the rest of it.

Well, along comes the student revolution and one of the things that they objected to was the formality in the classroom, the fact that there was a gulf between the professor and the students, and there ought to be a little more rapport, and so I began by saying,

Wilson: "You have your choice. Do you want me to call you Mr. Jamison or do you want me to call you Bill Jamison?" "Bill." Universally they chose their first names. Nobody wanted to be called "mister" or "miss" then. So that old point of view then had outlived its usefulness. Now the students wanted the personal, more informal contact, whereas before we thought they had needed the more formal contact to mature them. Maybe they mature faster now. I'm sure they do.

Of course, the younger faculty members left off their jackets and ties and went into the classroom in shirts and sweaters and so on. I have never allowed myself to do that. It's fairly ingrained in me the fact that I was taught when I was a young faculty member that we have certain standards of conduct and of dress and manners and so on to uphold as models for these students and we can't allow ourselves to miss that opportunity to show them how ladies and gentlemen really operate in the civilized world.

Many of the younger faculty members who did follow the dress of the rebel students I felt were losing their own identities and were being rather faddish and so on and not realizing that they have a certain dignity and responsibility. Just to ape the students didn't amount to anything. Anybody can look raunchy! [laughter] It's the easiest thing in the world.

On and Off-Campus Theater Activity

Riess: Would you give a sketch of von Neumayer, his style and impact?

Wilson: I think he was the enemy and adversary of the Sam Hume group. I became a very good friend of "Vonny" as we called him. He was a man of great dignity and presence. He didn't have any academic degrees, but he was a good man of the theater, having been an actor in traveling companies and in stock companies. Benjamin Ide Wheeler hired him in the public speaking department to teach the courses in acting. I'm not sure when he came in, but my impression is that he was here when Sam Hume was made director of the theater, and when Sam Hume became the director and the star and so on, and the poor little public speaking department was no place, naturally there was rivalry and enmity there. Later on, when I met Morris Ankrum, another actor who was here with the Sam Hume group, he didn't like von Neumayer. He said, "Oh, what a poisonous person von Neumayer is!" So there was real bitterness there.

Wilson: But the academic side eventually won out. The Sam Hume group went and Vonny was left. Vonny then did his best to keep the Greek Theater activity alive and he was the one who directed Margaret Anglin and non-student casts there. The predecessor of the Committee on Arts and Lectures was the Committee on Music and Drama of which William Popper, the old professor of Semitic languages, was the head. But, of course, von Neumayer was on that committee and the committee did hire various companies, like the Reginald Travers Players of San Francisco, who would come over and give a production. They kept alive some dramatic activity.

Meanwhile, the ASUC had the Little Theater going, but every now and then the drama people in the public speaking department would give a play in Wheeler Auditorium. I remember Sarah Huntsman Sturgess often directed one play a year there. There was not any cohesive organization. You had the public speaking department, you had the Committee on Music and Drama, you had the Little Theater of the ASUC, and it wasn't very coordinated. So I felt at the end of his life that von Neumayer felt fairly frustrated.

He had hoped for a theater building all of the time he was here and he had told me that when Wheeler Hall was in the planning stages he had gone to Benjamin Ide Wheeler and begged that there be a theater included, actually a theater with the stage house and all of the facilities that you have to have for a regular theatrical production. At that point President Wheeler had promised that there would be. Then at a later point President Wheeler had called von Neumayer in and said, "I have bad news for you. It was impossible to include a fully equipped theater in the new building. There are not the funds available and there are no prospects to get the funds, so we're including an auditorium and that's all." When von Neumayer told me that with great sadness, he said his great dream went glimmering.

During Eddy Duerr's tenure (he was the director of the Little Theater under the ASUC for many years), they had sporadic hopes of building a theater building. In one Blue and Gold during his time in the thirties, there is reproduced a plan of a theater there, but that came to nothing.

Then for a while there was talk about the university buying a movie theater called the Campus Theater, which was directly across Bancroft Way from what is now Zellerbach Auditorium. That movie theater had been built as a legitimate theater. It had a stage house where scenery could be raised and lowered. It had dressing rooms. It had some support facilities. It had a remarkable auditorium seating because it was an arena type theater, all of the seats on a floor that sloped up with a central aisle going

Wilson: across, very much like Zellerbach Playhouse. It was one of the Fox West Coast theaters and there was talk about buying that and that came to nothing. Now that building has been remodeled into offices, and nobody walking along Bancroft today knows that it was once the Campus Theater. It was a movie theater and I well remember going there.

Now and then it was used. I remember seeing a junior farce performed on the stage of the Campus Theater. But there were always hopes and plans and possibilities for an actual theater building and none of them came to fruition until Zellerbach Hall, and that was dedicated in our centennial year, 1968. So since the university had been chartered in 1868 it took us a hundred years [laughter] to get a building that was specifically designed for a theater and for theatrical activities.

Riess: I guess a lot of people would maintain that the stimulation of not having a stage can be as positive.

Wilson: Oh, yes, the ingenuity that you had to develop to use the platform, the lecture platform of Wheeler Auditorium, was really remarkable, and it sort of set a standard for little theaters throughout the country--"Well, the University of California can do wonderful things on a platform, why can't you?" Of course, we always had the Greek Theater, but that has immense possibilities and immense drawbacks too. It is vast and you have to have a spectacle there and it's very expensive to use and you're at the mercy of the weather.

Riess: The playhouse which had been a church was another conversion. That was contemporary with all of this, wasn't it?

Wilson: Yes, and Everett Glass was the great director of the Berkeley Playhouse. Everett had graduated from Amherst. He was a good friend of Alexander Meiklejohn, who had been the president of Amherst while Everett was there. I guess Everett was a part of the Sam Hume group, but I'm not sure about that. He was very much a part of the Berkeley theatrical scene and his connection with the campus was sporadic. He just about always taught in the summer sessions and directed the Wheeler Hall plays in the summer. When the English Club revived its play-giving, we hired him to do the Aristophanes play in the spring of 1933.

He married Marie Bell Glass. She was a supervisor in women's physical education. He was the father of two, a son, Bill Glass, who is now the announcer for football games in the stadium and for basketball games in Harmon, and a daughter, Helen. Everett's last theatrical activity was as a movie actor. He went back to acting. He was a good actor and had his regular agent in Hollywood, although

Wilson: he lived in Berkeley. He never did big roles, but he made a very good living doing small parts because he had a striking presence, a striking face, different from anybody you ever saw.

Riess: Can you describe him?

Wilson: It was a very patrician Roman face, a big patrician nose and high forehead. Eventually he lost his hair and it was white curls on his head and piercing blue eyes. But I think of his face as kind of like a battle ax, that sharp and that fine. He could be spotted in any movie--"Oh, there's Everett"--because of that face. But as far as I know that [acting] was after he stopped directing and doing things around here and teaching. He told me once that he had been offered a job teaching acting at the University of Minnesota, but he looked at a map and found that the University of Minnesota was not on an ocean and he couldn't teach at any place that wasn't right on the sea, so he turned it down. But he did lots of things around here, theaterwise--acting, directing, and playwriting too. A couple of his plays were done in Wheeler Auditorium. I guess he directed them and they were done during the summer.

He was a very creative and colorful figure, but a very gentle person. He wasn't one to create any antagonism the way Sam Hume had. He had a gentle diplomacy about him, although he wasn't a wishy-washy person. He had a charm and a buoyancy and a gaiety that was very disarming. You couldn't stay mad at Everett.

I guess the Berkeley Playhouse was still going then, but I don't remember seeing any plays down there. I remember Everett, though, had a collection of the posters from the Berkeley Playhouse. University Archives may have those.

Riess: And did you know Irving Pichel?

Wilson: I was never acquainted with Irving Pichel. I remember his stunning performance in the 1928 production of Antigone with Margaret Anglin. They connected in that production, as they have in several since, the stage with the orchestra (that is, the dancing circle), with a beautiful flight of stairs. I remember Creon's entrance down the ramp with a great purple train behind him and then mounting the stairs in such a way that he stood at the top with that train spread out like a peacock's tail, a most imperial, commanding figure. His own projection of emotion was tremendous. We in the audience were all gripped--even I as a sophomore was gripped by this--and his agony at the end is something I still remember.

I saw Irving Pichel at the Pasadena Playhouse now and then. I think he went down and directed there. He also became a very successful Hollywood director. He never returned, so far as I know, to Berkeley for any significant capacity.

Wilson: Morris Ankrum was part of the Sam Hume group. I did know Morris Ankrum because when I went to work on the Shakespeare festivals at the Pasadena Playhouse in the summers of 1934 and 1935, Morris Ankrum was both a star actor and a director. That's where I got a little of the insight into the deadly rivalry and dislike that existed between von Neumeyer and Ankrum, Sam Hume, and Irving Pichel and all that group.

The summer of '33 I was here in Berkeley with Everett Glass. The summers of '34, '35, and '36 were at Pasadena. In '34 I was just a student there. It was '35 and '36 that I was a general errand boy in those Shakespeare festivals. But I was assistant to Morris Ankrum for the production of Coriolanus. That was in the summer of '36. They did the Graeco-Roman plays of Shakespeare and that's where I observed him. He played Coriolanus and he also directed the play. He was a man of tremendous vitality and tremendously high strung. You always felt that he was restraining explosion by sheer will-power. [laughter] When he did explode, everybody would quake. But he was a handsome Coriolanus.

Riess: Is that a requisite for a theater person, to be so theatrical?

Wilson: I don't think necessarily. There are all kinds of directors and actors and all kinds of successes, no matter what your temperament is. You can be a tense, explosive martinet or you can be a very mild, gentle person. Now, Edwin Booth, who most people think is the greatest actor that America ever produced, was a very gentle person--quiet, modest, a man of sorrows. He did have a very sorrowful life. But I never heard of any tantrums. Whereas Edwin Forrest, who preceded him and after whom he was named Edwin, was a man of great temperament and temper. If he exploded, he'd throw somebody off the stage. So you find all kinds.

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Wilson: I think great sensitivity to people and things is very necessary to anybody in the theater, certainly for actors, to grasp how other people are feeling, reacting, and whatnot, because you gather your ability to act by being able to understand a great range of emotions in other people. If you can't sense that, how can you reproduce it?

The English Club

Riess: You were very involved with the English Club, weren't you?

Wilson: When I was an undergraduate, the English Club was pretty quiescent. I didn't know much about it. When I was notified that I had been elected to membership I had to ask a little bit what it was and I

Wilson: was told, "Oh, it's a very exclusive group and you should join." So I joined. The first meeting I attended, I was elected president without knowing anything about the activities of the group. This was now at the end of '31 when I was back here as a graduate student in English.

Riess: You were invited on February 12, 1930, according to your scrapbook.

Wilson: Oh, then I was away, you see, that year, so didn't get to participate. This clears up my mind. So it was not until I came back in the spring of '31 to finish my baccalaureate degree that I went to a meeting of the English Club and that was when I was elected. I was elected president in the spring of '31. They knew I was going to be back as a graduate student and that was one of the reasons. It was purely quixotic that here somebody who had never been to a meeting before was suddenly elected president, but it turned out to be one of the most stimulating and enjoyable experiences of my next years because the club had started--one edition of the Blue and Gold says that it was organized January 31, 1901. But later on in the Blue and Gold it says "founded in 1902."

Riess: Yes, 1902 is what I have.

Wilson: Somebody else says 1903. It was originally founded to encourage students in their literary talents. But then within the first five years it took over dramatic activity and took over the Occident. I had been told once that it also originally published The Pelican, but I think that's wrong.

But by the time I was a member of the English Club it was no longer an English club. That was a misnomer. It was an arts honor society and it elected students who dabbled or participated in all of the arts, not just writers. So we had a wonderful cross section of people. We started regular meetings and they were usually held on a Sunday evening at somebody's home. The host usually provided a light Sunday supper of some kind. This developed and they became social events that everybody looked forward to.

Riess: How large was the group?

Wilson: Well, we'd have thirty to forty people at these Sunday night meetings and they turned out to be hilarious because all of the punsters and all of the wits loved to come. I quickly realized that you ran such a meeting not by the Robert's Rules of Order but by English Club rules. You let the members generate all the fun and all of the entertainment themselves and you gradually got something accomplished. But it was through their own particular method. The funny things that were said, the wit that was exhibited there, I wish had been recorded.



It is with pleasure that the English Club, Arts Honor Society of the University of California, announces your election to membership. The new members will be presented to the club at a dinner to be held Sunday February fourteenth at the Claremont Country Club, at six thirty.

Initiates will correspond with the President, Garff Bell Wilson, 2538 Durant Avenue. The initiation fee is ten dollars.

THE ENGLISH CLUB OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA



<i>President</i>	Garff Bell Wilson
<i>Vice-President</i>	Jane Richardson
<i>Secretary</i>	Alice McCune
<i>Treasurer</i>	Cornelia Adams

ACTIVE MEMBERS

Bruce Arias	Prof. W. E. Farnham	Prof. G. R. Potter
Edith Arnstein	Leonid Gran	Prof. William Popper
Josephine Argiewicz	Everett Glass	Nestor Paiva
Prof. Ray Boynton	Michael Goodman	Margaret Peterson
Prof. H. L. Bruce	Theodore Gorbacheff	George Pettitt
Albert Bender	John Grover	Valerie Quandt
Betty Ballantine	Prof. J. C. Haley	Prof. Max Radin
Howard Banks	Prof. W. M. Hart	Rhea Radin
Edward Barnhart	Prof. Joel Hildebrand	Prof. Worth Ryder
Myron Beggs	Peter Hansen	Dorothy Beno
Ralph Berringer	Charlotte Hatch	Prof. L. J. Richardson
William Brooke	Louise Hildebrand	Virginia Russ
Dan Belmont	Charles A. Hogan	Christine Rinne
Elizabeth Bates	Carolyn Johnson	Prof. S. H. Sturgess
Howard Baker	Prof. Alex Kaun	Pauline Stuart
H. M. Chevalier	Dorothy G. Knowlton	Mary Charlotte Stuart
Prof. J. R. Caldwell	Marjorie Legge	Malcolm Smith
Prof. J. M. Cline	Prof. Leonard Loeb	Jeanne Savinien
Charles C. Cushing	Prof. B. H. Lowie	Morna Scott
Charlotte Cerf	David Lyon	Alyda Stewart
Louise Clendenin	Gerald Marsh	President R. G. Sproul
Richard Clendenin	Prof. Guy Montgomery	Robert Triest
Isabel Creed	Eileen McCall	Prof. C. D. von Neumayer
Provost Monroe E. Deutsch	Selma Moravic	Prof. Chauncey Wells
Margaret Deakers	Prof. Eugen Neuhaus	Scott Wilson
Vernon De Mars	Douglas Nicholson	Bernard Witkin
William Denny	Paul Nathan	Rose Wood
Helen Drake	Oleta O'Connor	Robert Windrem
Francis Drake	Mary F. Pieper	Elaine Wallace
Harlan Dunning	Prof. S. C. Pepper	Bruce Yates
Helen Fancher	Mrs. S. C. Pepper	

from an April 21, 1933 program for an English Club
production of *The Trial of Euripides*
in the Greek Theatre

Riess: What kinds of things were you getting decided?

Wilson: Well, what we were going to do to justify our existence. In those days you had to have something to justify your existence, although, as I think I told you, Chauncey Wells, the professor of English, was the one who said, "We don't need any purpose. Our purpose is the redemption of leisure." But eventually with all of this talent popping around we decided we should do something. In my time I know we sponsored an art exhibit of the work of the members. We sponsored some workshops in writing, poetry writing I sat in on, and short story writing and so on.

Riess: Open to the campus or open to yourselves?

Wilson: No, open only to the members. The art exhibit, of course, was open to the public.

But then it became apparent that with all of this talent here the one form of art which includes everybody is a theatrical production and that had been in their background. So we decided to do a Greek play again. We got the Committee on Music and Drama to sponsor it; that is, to put up the money for it. Von Neumayer was hired to direct the play and then the whole English Club was the production crew of the thing, designing the scenery, making the costumes, the backstage machinery.

I was the production manager. I had to coordinate these various things and during the production I was the one who had the great tank of gas that was in the Temple of Hera. There's a line in the Bacchae in which Dionysus says, "Undying as the hate dies not which Hera bore for Semele." At that point in our production the great flame has to rise out of the roof of the temple. I was there turning the spigot to ignite the flame! [chuckles] Von Neumayer directed that. Vernon De Mars played Dionysus in that. Rose Wood played the mother who tears into bits her own son when she's inflicted by the madness visited on her by Dionysus because they had been neglecting the worship of Dionysus and so on.

Well, there are a lot of little funny things. For example, in working on this production, the director wanted this sheet of fire to come up to the roof of the Temple of Hera, and whom do we call on? Joel Hildebrand, who happened to be a member of the English Club. He's a chemist, you know, and an athlete and all those things, but he also was such an all-around person he was elected. He provided the tank of gas from the chemistry department and he taught me how to turn the handle so as not to burn down everything on the stage.

Wilson: Various other people--the head of Pentheus, who is the son, the bloody head of Pentheus has to be brought in--the members modeled that. It was a joint enterprise.

Riess: Was it a little tongue in cheek?

Wilson: Oh, no, it was deadly serious. No, deadly serious. Everything was done with a lot of joy and enthusiasm and wit and so on, but it was to be a beautiful production, and it was. It was a stunning production, so successful, of course, that we immediately started on one for the next year, and decided that was to be a comedy. Everett Glass, the man with the lighter touch--I don't think von Neumayer wanted to direct Aristophanes, he preferred the Greek tragedies, and so we hired Everett Glass to do it. I recall with some amusement now, I had to talk to him about salary, what he would charge. Now, this is a huge enterprise really, to direct a play in the Greek Theater. He hemmed and hawed a little bit and he said, "I'm sorry to tell you I don't think I can do it. It would involve two months work at least and I couldn't do it for less than \$300." [chuckles] At today's prices that seems unbelievable. But anyway he was hired for \$300 and he got together a cast and we had a great deal of fun on that.

Production money came from Professor Popper and his committee. I was a happy graduate student then and had to meet with Professor Popper frequently. He was a devoted servant of the university, but he was upset by all of the harebrained schemes that I came up with, one of them being--Everett Glass, the director, had decided he wanted to paint the stage of the Greek Theater in some great colors (stripes and waves and so on), so when the audience from the upper hill looked down they'd see this great pattern of color on the stage. So I said this was an idea that the director had and Mr. Popper said--[hrrmph]--"A terrible idea, terrible!"

Well, eventually Everett dropped the idea, not because of Popper's opposition. But the next time I had a session with Mr. Popper I said, "Mr. Glass has decided not to ask you to paint the stage." Professor Popper said, "I'm glad to hear it, glad to hear it!" Then I said (I had decided it wasn't a good idea either), "I guess this is the first time, Mr. Popper, that you and I have ever agreed on anything!" "Hmm, I must be wrong," said Professor Popper. [laughter] I've never forgotten that! It didn't cut me down, although it was the perfect--what do they call it?--squelch, just the perfect squelch. But I've told that story on myself forever because I thought it was so typical of Popper. He was a long-suffering and faithful servant of the university. He ran the whole business and there was never a production or a concert any place where he wasn't there keeping his eye on the thing.

Riess: He sounds like the kind of person who keeps a heavy hand on an operation. How about Ted Bowie?

Wilson: Ted was, I think, a teaching assistant in French. (He eventually got a Ph.D. in French and went East and taught French.) He was a person who started out by being ridiculed anytime his name came up during an election because in the minds of many people he was the perfect esthete, languid and affected. He eventually was elected and he eventually became president and one of the fine presidents of the English Club, and under him they did a lot of different things. He was on the campus then the perfect image or the perfect caricature of the Oscar Wilde type of esthete. But he really had a fine mind and he had fine esthetic perceptions and sensibilities. When he got into the English Club he became a pillar of strength and he became the president who ran things as I had run things. You had to draw on people and organize meetings and so on.

Riess: Stephen Pepper recalled your smooth, easy, and successful relationship with the English Club.*

Wilson: Stephen Pepper mentioned me?

Riess: Yes.

Wilson: Well, we did have a happy time, and our initiation banquets became classic. Max Radin, the professor of law, was a member of the club. Rhea Radin, his daughter, who was an actress, was also a member. But he had a crackling wit and we always had him as toastmaster and these banquets were uproarious in the way Max Radin would run them as toastmaster. We had other people contributing from the floor too.

Riess: Was the influence more from faculty than the undergraduates?

Wilson: Many of them were students like me. George Pettitt was a great punster, and Pettitt was a student then. Michael Goodman may have been a junior faculty member, but we thought of him as a student then. Vernon De Mars definitely was a student then.

The faculty members who stood out at our regular meetings were Stephen Pepper and Eugen Neuhaus, the painter. Who else do I remember particularly? [pauses to look over list] Active members: well, Jim Caldwell I remember as contributing to this general gaiety. Maybe this was the continuation of the Bohemian survival.

*Stephen C. Pepper, Art and Philosophy at the University of California, 1919-1962, Regional Oral History Office, 1963.

Riess: Yes, Pepper said that it was "a brilliant Bohemian group."

Wilson: Doing its own thing, but never in competition with anything else and a loyal part of the university establishment. So we weren't fighting with anybody.

Riess: So it is not the Bohemian group of Morris Ankrum and the off-campus--

Wilson: That's right, but gifted people. Now, as I look over this, I see John Grover. He was one of our top actors and comedians. He had a leading role in The Trial of Euripides or The Thesmophoriazusae, as I call it. He became the long-time announcer for the Standard Symphony Hour. Nestor Paiva listed here was also one of the leading comic actors in The Trial of Euripides and he went to Hollywood. He became a very successful character actor in Hollywood. I see Margaret Petersen is listed here. She's a well-known modern painter. She became a member of the art department here and then she wouldn't sign the oath (the loyalty oath) and was fired and went to Europe and, I think, spent most of her life in Europe. I think she's back in the U.S.A. now. Let's see, Bernie Witkin is a very famous attorney and did all kinds of work there.

Riess: He was the one who bemoaned his wealth?

Wilson: Yes, that's the one.

Riess: That made me wonder last time, and I'll ask, whether there was kind of a brilliant Jewish crowd?

Wilson: There were brilliant Jewish people included, but there was never any consciousness that there was a Jewish group and a non-Jewish group. This was the one organization where that was never thought of. It would have been unthinkable. The Jews were just a part of a happy, creative, Bohemian group.

Charles Cushing, as you know, became a professor of music and so did Bill Denny. Is Bill here? [refers to list] Yes, Bill Denny. They're both professors of music, both retired now. A lot of these people remain with the university like Michael Goodman. Professor Farnham is in here. He was one of my English professors I remember with a great deal of respect and admiration.

Riess: When it says "active members" there, what would inactive imply?

Wilson: Those we didn't list here! [laughter] In an earlier Blue and Gold in 1932 I think you'll find them listed according to university associates, which meant faculty and junior faculty members, then

Wilson: often graduate students, and then undergraduate students. But we decided that that was silly, we were all one big happy family, and so we just called "active" members of the groups those who contributed in coming.

Riess: What was the process of electing new members?

Wilson: We met a couple of times. Nominations were put in one meeting. We thought about them and then we thoroughly roasted every single person and we finally voted. I don't recall if it was secret voting. It was by raising your hands and openly saying yes and no. The group was exceedingly forthright and outspoken, I assure you, because I was there when Ted Bowie had been nominated a couple of times and he was howled down with great glee and great mirth and ended up by being one of the best members. I can't remember who was turned down, fortunately.

Maybe you noticed in my scrapbook that my invitation to become a member was a handwritten note. One of the things we did when I became president was have the Grabhorn Press design a printed invitation. I don't know whether you noticed them. That's one of them.

Riess: I did copy it so we could include it in your oral history because it's such a nice item.

Wilson: That's an example of the Grabhorn Press. They did all of our printing. We had a little catalogue for the art exhibit. The Grabhorn Press printed that, although I don't have a copy of that. I've got copies of some catalogues because Ted Bowie, when he became president, was more interested in art exhibits than he was dramatic productions and I think I've got a couple of the catalogues of the exhibits sponsored by the English Club (put together by the English Club) and I guess Ted Bowie had the good fortune--I was up teaching in the redwood country--of having Gertrude Stein at one of the meetings of the English Club. They were all entranced by Gertrude Stein. They said she started rubbing her belly and her head at the same time. [laughter] They asked her all kinds of things and it must have been hilarious too, her response.

Riess: Would they be irreverent or would they be quite proper?

Wilson: Oh, they would create the kind of atmosphere which she would enjoy, a give-and-take atmosphere. So she could say funny things about them and they could say funny things about her or about anything in general. I think it would be a very congenial arrangement at that time.

Wilson: I missed seeing Gertrude Stein then, and I missed seeing her in Paris by one week. During my wartime experience I was sent in January, 1945 to a week's school in Paris. The Allies foresaw that the war was winding down, that Germany had to collapse soon. They didn't want to be caught as they had been caught at the end of the First World War, that is with millions of men on their hands and nothing for them to do. So they were pulling out of every unit down to battalion level some officer to go to school to plan short courses, games, all kinds of projects, so that the G.I.'s--they were going to demobilize them as fast as they could--but so there could be something to fill the vacuum when they were not fighting and not hauling ammunition and doing all of those things, when they were waiting to go home. I was chosen from my battalion to take this course for a week. And lo and behold, the week before Gertrude Stein had addressed the previous class and I had missed her by a week! [laughter] There it is, my near brushes with Gertrude Stein.

Well, the club was very vigorous under Ted Bowie. But then I think Arthur Hutson of the English department (he was a junior member of the English department) became president, and if my memory is correct, what I've heard from other people, Art got too busy, didn't call meetings, didn't develop any projects for the club, and it slowly disintegrated. There seems to have been no person or persons to step in there and say, "Let's keep this going." Some--oh, it must be ten years ago now--Virginia Russ, who had been a dancer in the Greek choruses and became a great lady at Berkeley, called together or had a reunion party for as many members of the English Club as still survived.

I remember that gathering and there was some of the old sparkle. When did Stephen Pepper die? Either he was there or he had been consulted because he was quoted or he himself said, "I think there is no future for reviving the English Club. Its work is done and now well-organized departments of the university have taken over these functions. There is a dramatic arts department now doing things. The publications have a regular publications council and staff." (That has since disintegrated.)

But the feeling was the gap between the survivors and the possible new blood was so great that you couldn't re-invigorate the group. You couldn't do the same thing that had been done. It was both a happy and a sad reunion because the feeling was for most everybody that now there's not much future as far as we are concerned. But if the time comes when three or four undergraduates read the history and say, "We should have a club like this, let's start it again," and if the enthusiasm developed, then the survivors would help them out. But that hasn't happened in the past ten years.

Witty Times and People

- Riess: That kind of club is not entirely an obsolete thing. Universities like Harvard and eastern universities had such clubs. What's happened to them?
- Wilson: Well, I think they've all gone by the board too. Hasty Pudding at Harvard and the Triangle Club at Princeton, I don't think they're active anymore. Just as Skull and Keys isn't active anymore except as a small group of hard-drinking students who don't have any objectives now as far as service to the campus is concerned. But there again, maybe these impulses and this talent are now going out in the communities rather than staying on the campus.
- Riess: We talked about this before, but it does seem that kind of brilliantly witty atmosphere is gone.
- Wilson: Yes, and maybe--[pause] I don't know all the reasons. Certainly one of them is that the students' energies are turned outward now off the campus very often. There are also some who are very serious in their graduate work or undergraduate work, trying to get into medical school or law school or some graduate school, and society around them demands so much attention that it just may be that that's part of the reason. But you would think--well, another is the way the university has become compartmentalized and so on. Each field of knowledge is growing more complex all of the time and if you're going to be a landscape architect you don't have much time to do anything but landscape architecture up there in the College of Environmental Design. They are just sort of enslaved up there. It may be that students majoring in English and creative writing and so on, there's so darn much to do in their own field now that they can't be --
- Riess: The Renaissance man.
- Wilson: Yes, it may be impossible. But it would seem a paradox that the more a campus becomes separated into these diverse units, the more necessary a group that cuts across all fields would seem to be, the more useful that would seem to be, to draw together the interdisciplinary groups. They talk about that in academic circles and now in the arts. I know it was wonderfully stimulating, the old English Club, to have the point of view of all these different artists. When we put together a Greek production, with all of the input in there, it was the farthest thing from a Gordon Craig production of a single genius doing it all. This was collective

Wilson: geniuses; of course, the director had the final say, and he did coordinate all of these things, but it was a wonderfully rich, successful production under this scheme. Maybe departments have become too inbred.

Riess: What goes on at the Faculty Club? Is there brilliance up there?

Wilson: [chuckles] No, there never was. That's the continuing problem of the Faculty Club, that it's so stuffy and fuddyduddish that people don't want to go up there except for meetings and when they have to have a quick meal. But as a club where you find your friends and where you can exchange banter and news and so on, it just does not succeed except for a very few people here and there who use the club as that. Otherwise, it's a place to hold meetings and to get food and that's all.

Riess: We're just talking about the problems of a large university in the 20th century.

Wilson: That's right. I was for two years a very bad chairman of a Faculty Club committee. Milton Chernin became president of the Faculty Club and he latched onto me and in his exuberant way said, "I've got to do something about making the Faculty Club a happier place, a livelier place, a place where people will want to go." [sighs] Well, he first wanted me to be on some kind of a group to put out a faculty newsletter. I said, "No way, get Hafner to do that."

But I said, "There is this other problem." "Oh, do it, do it." So we formed what was called the CAF Committee, "committee on--" I can't even remember what--

Riess: How about California faculty?

Wilson: Oh, no, it was jazzier than that! [laughter] I can't even remember the name. Something about animation and festivities. The "f" was for festivities, amiability and festivities, or something like that, how to make the Faculty Club more enjoyable, more social, and so on.

Well, I had a good little committee and we met now and then and prepared a whole list of things that should be done. But to get them done depended upon the Faculty Club government, the officers and board over there. We could only suggest and we couldn't put these things into operation. Well, none of them were put into operation as far as we were concerned and so after two years I just resigned from the committee, and the committee, I think, disappeared. Oh, there have been a lot of things improved up there. But it's not the gathering place where you meet your friends and where you get the same kind of sparkle give-and-take or a brilliant aura of wit and wisdom.

Riess: Stephen Pepper talked about going off campus to the Black Sheep restaurant.

Wilson: I remember that well, and the English department had a round table there. The undergraduates, when we could afford it, would go and try to sit close so we could listen to them. Sure. But does that occur anyplace? On the campus I mean?

There can be small faculty gatherings where it does occur. I remember last September Chancellor Bowker's scheduling committee decided to give him a birthday luncheon at my house. It was going to be a surprise at first, but it couldn't be a surprise! We had twelve people there and no serious gifts. Various people spontaneously dreamed up something. I, for example, found a poster which is my favorite poster. It shows a flock of geese all milling around and then the caption is, "Do something," in big letters: "Lead, follow, or get out of the way." [laughter] I said, "You might want to hang this in your office."

It was just a lovely, witty, funny, spontaneous party in which Chancellor Bowker was at his best too. Somebody asked him (he had already announced his retirement, his stepping down), "What are you going to do?" Somebody else said, "Well, he'd be very useful in the filing department." Somebody else said, "But does he want a promotion?" You know, little things like that which under the circumstances seemed very funny. But that happens now and then. I don't attend any undergraduate groups, but they're not structured that way anymore.

I was asked to speak before the big game this last November, to the Californians and the Oski Dolls, who had a joint meeting. It was held in one of the conference rooms of the student union, and instead of telling them about traditions I gave them a big game quiz. This is an old gimmick of mine. I used to use it on the classes when they were so popping with enthusiasm on the Friday before the big game and they couldn't concentrate on anything. I said, "Okay, we'll have a quiz." I divided the class and asked questions: "This big game will be number what? How many games has Stanford won? How many games has Cal won? Who was coaching in this year? Who was coaching in that year? And so on."

So I revived this and gave it to the Oski Dolls and the Californians and it turned out to be lively. It was a spontaneous thing. It developed out of them and I don't think their usual meetings are this way.

I no longer go to meetings of the Golden Bear. They were never this way anyway. They were always serious discussions of university problems and now they are serious discussions of university problems

- Wilson: without the key people present [laughter] who can do something about the problems. I'm an honorary member of Skull and Keys and once in a while I used to go to that, but I don't go anymore because it's just drinking--nothing but that. There used to be a Winged Helmet and all of these organizations were once fairly lively. But none of them quite like the English Club.
- Riess: Maybe the Bohemian Club in San Francisco is a pretty good approximation?
- Wilson: But they hire the gifted people to entertain them. A friend of mine who is a member said, "Well, that's it. It's rich men who hire the talented people to entertain them. They make them members." But the English Club was all creative people who had something to contribute. We weren't performers for a separate group. We performed for each other and for the university and had a very jolly time doing it.

VII RETURN TO BERKELEY, 1946

[Interview 7: April 17, 1980]##

The Postwar Campus

Riess: When you were called up in 1942, what was the attitude about the war on campus? Had it divided the faculty in the way that other issues had since and before?

Wilson: No, the way the war came it was unanimously supported by everybody I knew or talked to. There may have been a few dissidents, but so few that I don't remember anything. But there was great optimism. The home front thought that our might would rise and quickly be apparent and that we would then be out of war in short order. In fact, when Vice-President and Provost Monroe Deutsch said good-bye to me he said, "You'll be back in two years, I'm sure. The war can't last longer than that, and you may be back within a year."

Riess: That was optimistic.

Wilson: Yes, but the country later discovered how poorly prepared we were and it took some time to crank up the production machine and turn it from butter into guns. When the production machine started, it inundated Europe and the Far East with our supplies. If the Germans, for example, lost ten tanks, they were hard pressed to replace them. If we lost ten tanks, we replaced them with a hundred tanks. When we got cranked up it was one of the production miracles of all time.

Riess: There wasn't any anti-war movement?

Wilson: No, and I discovered the truth of that famous [William] James essay, "The Moral Equivalent of War." The danger to the U.S.A. was such that it united all of the citizens, whatever political views or religious views and so on. Anybody in uniform was a hero and was

Wilson: accepted. I don't think I ever went into a bar or a soda fountain and sat down but what somebody would buy me a drink or a soda or whatever I wanted. When you walked down the street in a uniform, why, everybody said "hello" to you and smiled at you.

And then a strange effect I had not anticipated was when I took my uniform off, put on civilian clothes and walked along the street, I felt lost. Nobody looked at me, nobody smiled at me, nobody said anything to me. I realized I belonged to a vast fraternity--ten, eleven, twelve million men belonged to it. You spoke to each other and everyone spoke to you. But when you became a civilian you were an isolated individual again. That was bothersome for a while.

So I understood what James said, that there needs to be a moral equivalent of war that will unite the people the way a war does and will create the sense of fraternity and of belonging and of helping each other along. But so far we haven't found it.

Riess: Yes, that's interesting. It also reminds me to ask about the conscientious objector status. Was that invoked much among people that you knew?

Wilson: No, I didn't know any until the war was over and I discovered that Professor Robert Beloof, who joined the speech department after the war was over, had been a conscientious objector and had to spend his time in a hospital somewhere in the U.S. But nobody I knew personally before the war had claimed that status.

Most of my prewar students had been in uniform and it was remarkable how the university resumed its prewar activities and organization as soon as the war was over. I thought everything would be completely changed. I thought our lives would be forever different. But it was just a hiatus and people wanted to get back and do the same things and resume exactly where they had left off.

I was reminded of that in two or three incidents. We had sign-ups that first term after my return for Speech 1AB. I was behind one of the desks or in the background and a girl was taking down assignments. She said, "What section do you want?" The young man said, "Oh, I have no idea." She said, "Did you have 1A?" "Yes," he said, "I had it before the war." She said, "Who was your instructor there?" "He was a Dr. Wilson and goodness knows where he is." She said, "He's standing right behind you." So he took 1B from me with a four-year interval between! He had had 1A before the war and 1B after the war.

Riess: But part of what you're saying is that there was uncertainty about the fate of those students.

Wilson: Oh, yes, I should say so. There were a lot of men that didn't get back. But those who did survive the war, survived it in very good shape.

I remember another boy I met. He had been a happy extrovert kind of student. His name was Vance Scardson or Vance Something. He became a radio announcer. But I met him on Wheeler steps one day in 1946 and I said, "Vance! You're looking great." He laughed happily and cheerfully and said, "I'm feeling great." I said, "Were you in the service?" "Oh, yes." I said, "What did you do?" "Oh, well, I was in the Air Force." "Oh, were you in combat?" "Oh, yes. I was shot down over Japanese territory." "You were? You survived?" "Yes, I was in a prisoner-of-war camp for a year." I said, "You've had hideous experiences, haven't you?" "Oh, yes, but they're over now." And he went along his merry way. Everybody didn't react that way. He just had a happy, resilient nature. I was amazed at the horrors he had gone through.

But anyway, life resumed its normal pattern. It was in 1946 when I got my first assignment from President Sproul. They had kept up the tradition of a president's reception for new students during the war. But he did not like the format. I'm told he said to George Pettitt, who was his executive assistant, "We need somebody to completely revise this format and have a new kind of reception, somebody new who can look at it with new eyes. Who can we get?" Pettitt was the one who knew I was back from the war and he said, "Why not try Garff Wilson?" Sproul said, "Get him! Let's see."

Riess: You and Sproul had had some contact when you were here in 1941?

Wilson: Oh, yes. When I had first come on the faculty as an instructor, the phone in the speech department office, which was then on the fourth floor of Wheeler Hall, rang and a voice said, "President Sproul wants to speak to you." I got on and I said, "President Sproul?" In a booming voice you could never forget he said, "Garff, nobody told me you were back on the campus! I'm glad to hear it. I want you to come to the reception for new students and be one of the faculty helpers. Will you do that?" I said, "I certainly will." Everybody in the office could hear what he was saying! And he hung up. So that was in 1941 and I had been one of the faculty hosts then.

In 1946 when Pettitt told him I was back I got a summons to his office then and he asked me if I wouldn't look over the past records and talk to the people who had done it before and devise something

Wilson: new. With the help of Agnes Robb we did. We moved it to Hearst Gymnasium. We took over all of the rooms there. We had a very elaborate program, a very elaborate system, and it worked very well. But I worked my head off on that.

Public Ceremonies Office

Wilson: Shortly after that Sproul called me in and said that he wanted to buy one-sixth of my time and pay me at the current rate of my faculty salary. As my faculty rank increased and my salary increased, so would my administrative stipend increase.

Riess: Was this negotiated with the speech department?

Wilson: Well, it turned out that this was an extra duty. During all of my teaching career I carried a full load of classes, of departmental duties, of writing, research, publication, and so on, and my work with the president and/or the chancellor was in addition.

Riess: It doesn't sound right.

Wilson: But the salary was in addition too. He paid me a sixth of my faculty salary in addition to my faculty salary.

When we first talked I said, "But you know, President Sproul, I'm a single man. Will this be a handicap as far as my obligations to you are concerned?" His reply was, "One single man is worth six married men to me!" [laughter] "I can call on them any hour of the day or night and they don't have family complications." And he used to do that. So it was a very refreshing experience working with Sproul.

The President's Reception for New Students

Riess: In the president's reception for new students, was it mostly a matter of turning something that had no organization into something that had some organization?

Wilson: They had a system where the students waited in an endless line before they got to shake hands with the president. That's one thing we said must go. The original system was that the faculty members

Wilson: took them through the line, introduced them to the president, and then left them by themselves on the dance floor. Our innovations were arranging it so as soon as the students arrived they filled out name tags and went immediately to entertainment areas. They could go right to the dance. A few were siphoned off to be in the receiving line. They didn't have to wait endlessly and we tried to keep the receiving line very short and keep calling the new students off the dance floor.

A faculty member still introduced them to the president, then escorted them to the dance floor where we organized a great committee of senior men and women who danced with them. So every freshman got to meet President and Mrs. Sproul. They had met a faculty escort. Then they usually met the student body president, who introduced them to a senior student to dance with them. Theoretically then that senior student was to introduce them to another new student.

Riess: What an elegant arrangement.

Wilson: It has continued in about the same way.

Riess: Was it a required event for any of the participants--faculty or students?

Wilson: No, but over the years--and from 1946 through 1979 is about thirty-three years--it has developed a great reputation. At first, we did a lot of advertising, sending notes around and announcements to the living groups and so on. But it has become a very popular event and the word-of-mouth advertising is such that we don't have to advertise. We send invitations to each new student in his registration packet and most of them come. The committee of senior hosts and hostesses is now a status position. Seniors are very anxious to be put on this committee, very anxious to participate, because it gives them a feeling that they have arrived, that they belong to something.

We never have any trouble with the faculty either. The invitations are rotated around and enough are invited so that if some faculty members can't make it or don't want to do it, it doesn't matter. We, in fact, have more help than we actually need.

We get out list of senior men and women from various offices. We don't make up the list ourselves. We send a note to the athletic director, "Give us names of some senior men in various sports." We send similar notes to the office of student information, the office of student activities, we send it all over--the

Wilson: ASUC and so on. We try to find the leaders or the students who have rendered good campus service and give them this reward. Then we keep this list and invite them to serve on Charter Day too, in the honor guard or as honor escorts. Many of them get invited to the commencement luncheon, too. So word has gotten out that the reception list is a very important list. It's not rigid. If we discover that we've omitted somebody who should be on it, why, we add them for the next event and so on. The system has made it possible for us to do away with any paid advertising completely.

About three or four years ago I got very irate with the Daily Californian, which is supposedly a campus newspaper. [laughter] It's an off-campus newspaper directed by off-campus people. But we used always to buy an ad for three or four days announcing the reception. Then we would get a story out of it, or maybe a snide little story making fun of the thing. So about three or four years ago we said, "Let's try not having any ads and see if it makes a difference." We did not place any ads. It made no difference at all. We had more people than we had the year before. Between 2,500 and 3,000 students attend the reception, and we can't handle any more than that.

Riess: I would think, with the university blowing hot and cold in the last ten years, that kind of event was the kind of event that people would tend to stay away from, but maybe not freshmen.

Wilson: No, we've continued to try and make it elegant and also enjoyable. The reception is held in the student union and we take over the whole union. There is dancing in Pauley Ballroom, of course, right from the beginning. There is cabaret entertainment and dancing down in the Bear's Lair, so-called. The bowling alley is open for free. The games rooms are open and free. We have free refreshments in several places. The whole plaza out there--they call it Lower Sproul Plaza, but that's technically incorrect, it's the Student Union Plaza--that is all barricaded just for the new students.

Riess: How do you keep the crashers out?

Wilson: We have barriers all around and a lot of the police force out. If the crashers are smart, all they do is borrow an invitation from a new student and they're in. Years ago when the reception was at Hearst Gymnasium, we had a couple of crashers from Stanford. The reason I knew they were from Stanford is they sought me out after they had gone through the whole routine to confess they had come to jeer and they had stayed to cheer. They said, "We received more attention at your reception than we have ever received on the Stanford campus!" [laughter] "We met more nice people and we just

Wilson: felt we'd like to confess to you that we'd come to make fun so we could go back and say what a raunchy affair it was, but it was very elegant and very friendly."

I usually tell that [story] to the senior hosts and hostesses. We have to meet with them ahead of the reception to tell them what their duties are.

Staffing Public Ceremonies

Riess: Who does all the leg work? Do you have a staff of sergeants rushing around?

Wilson: Yes. Originally, that first time in 1946, I did all of the leg work myself. It was an exhausting job. But now we've built up an organization on this campus as far as public events are concerned that is just unbeatable. I'd say we could enthrone a pope or an emperor if you gave us twenty-four hours or, as I sometimes rather irreligiously say, we could stage the resurrection, the second coming, if you give us notice [laughter], because over the many, many years I've been here, I've discovered the people that are absolutely dependable and devoted and willing.

Now my duties are very minimal because we now have an excellent system. It has been the result of trial and error, and many things we've tried we've finally rejected. For example, when it was in Hearst Gymnasium we tried organizing groups from different localities, we tried mixer dances, and all kinds of things to get the new students to feel integrated. But they weren't worth the effort at the time. Well, as I say, we have enough entertainment and we discovered the new students just enjoyed looking at each other and eyeing each other and the boys picking up the girls and the girls eyeing the boys--and they still get danced with by seniors. Sometimes they get picked up by the senior men who often disappear then. That's why we have a big committee!

The organization includes a group that we call supervisors. We have only one meeting ahead of time. We take out our notes from last year, discuss what went wrong, how we could strengthen this and strengthen that.

Riess: These are from among staff?

Wilson: Yes, staff and faculty. Terry Tough and Eleanor Thune, with a committee of senior girls, do all of the name tags. The police have a standard procedure. We just notify them of the time and they assign the

Wilson: officers. Facilities management now has a standard procedure for delivering signs and barricades and flags and so on. The ASUC officers have now a set policy of cleaning up and setting up tables and decorations and everything at various places. The food service knows what to do. Then Lila [Carmichael] of the chancellor's staff, Janice Starkey of the chancellor's staff, Maggie Johnson of the president's staff have traditional duties directing traffic. Also helpful are other members of the public ceremonies committee-- Jerry Thomas takes charge of directing traffic down stairs and so on. He's awfully good at it and he's assisted by Professor Snapper and the husbands of Terry and Eleanor.

Riess: Is the Alumni Association also involved in this?

Wilson: The Alumni Association director is on the committee. Unless we have special jobs, they're not in on the staging of the reception actually. On Charter Day we work closely with them because they have their alumni procession to the Greek Theater and they have their Charter Day banquet at the end of the day. We help and advise on protocol and that sort of thing. I call all of these people our "team." I don't think it can be matched anywhere in the country.

Riess: It's not as if you have to do a new and more sensational thing each year.

Wilson: No, no. We have a different group of students each year. [laughter]

Riess: A new audience, the same old show.

Wilson: The same old show, but brand new to them, and we just try to do a better job each year and have it as smooth as possible. As I say, it's very, very popular. It's the result of building up a tradition.

Two years ago we had a committee from UCLA, some undergraduates there, up to observe, to see how we did it because it had a good reputation even down there, and they were astonished as they watched the whole ritual and took copious notes. I wanted them to know that it takes a few years to build up the reputation and the tradition and they couldn't expect to have the success we have on their first time. I have not received any report as to how they have fared down there.

We had a most ecstatic letter following this Charter Day from the chairman of the public ceremonies committee at UCLA, Professor Waldo Phelps, whose final comment was that he wanted to talk to the chancellor and see if they shouldn't revise UCLA's charter ceremony so they could have the same kind of response and enthusiasm as we have up here. Perhaps they used to have it.

Riess: Is your public ceremonies committee a committee that is picked to your specifications? Are they really serving as your staff?

Wilson: Yes.

Riess: Is it administrative?

Wilson: It is an administrative committee appointed by the chancellor and the committee has mostly ex officio members by reason of their position, because there are certain people who have to be on it. Dick Hafner, or whoever is public affairs officer and public information officer, has to be on it. The chief of police has to be on it. He's in on every big event, of course. The head man in facilities management and two or three of his staff have to be on it. The director of the Alumni Association has to be on it because they are very much involved. [pause] Who else by virtue of position?

Riess: Publications?

Wilson: Well, that comes under public affairs. Dick Hafner does that. Then we have three or four students on it each year, one of whom has been on it for four years now. Another has been on it for three years now and they start to know their assignments, what they have to do. Then we have three or four faculty members who are theoretically rotated. But when ones like Jerry Thomas learn a certain series of jobs, I hate to have them leave the committee! [laughter] A few that don't really put roots down and enjoy it, we rotate. We're now looking for another female to be on the committee. We had one who never attended the meetings! We always have a representative from the three ROTC's because they furnish flag bearers, color guards, and various things. They used to furnish the honor guard, but uniforms now are not very much applauded so we had to do away with them.

Riess: But these people don't help you make decisions about the events, only about carrying them out?

Wilson: Oh, yes, we have a policy meeting and we are open to suggestions of what should be done, how can it be improved. Usually after an event I get input from all of the key people, who suggest this be changed and that be done and so on. There are no "yes" men in this group. They are very independent people, and if I turn my back things happen.

Once, in the fall of '77, I had been asked to be the escort for the alumni tour to the Black Sea and the Greek islands, because I have had several trips to those areas. So in September I couldn't

Wilson: be here. Dick Hafner took over and they decided to have such lavish refreshments and champagne for the faculty and student committee that we were in the hole a couple of thousand dollars. [laughter] Old penny pincher had to say, "No, no" to this, we simply can't afford that. I didn't want to go back to the chancellor asking for more money because we had spent so much. That would be a terrible thing to explain and justify.

Riess: How often do they meet?

Wilson: We don't meet formally as a committee oftener than two or three times a year, but we come together as individuals running various parts of this thing all of the time. Hafner is up here all of the time or I am down in his office. The facilities management people are in and out here all of the time. Maggie Johnson is in and out here all the time. Jerry Thomas is in and out here all the time.

Riess: But you wouldn't require too much of the faculty people though?

Wilson: No, although Jerry Thomas is a very devoted guy and he likes to be on top of things, know what's going on so he can do his job with maximum effectiveness.

In the background we do a lot of things. There's a big faculty-staff dinner dance in honor of Chancellor and Mrs. Bowker scheduled for the first of May. There is a very impressive committee of the Academic Senate which in name is running this dinner dance. Bob Connick is the chairman and he's very good. We have met a couple of times and we'll be meeting again tomorrow. They make some basic policy decisions, but all work is being done in the public ceremonies office, drafting the letters of invitation with the committee signature on them, collecting the money for the dinners and for gifts, making reservations for Pauley Ballroom where it's going to be, ordering the flowers, doing all of those things. That is entirely separate, but Jerry Thomas and I in public ceremonies are on that committee, and we're the ones who presented a possible budget and all the rest of the things. So public ceremonies is delighted to help with a great many other groups.

Riess: Historically, when did the public ceremonies committee begin?

Wilson: I'm not sure. I think the executive secretary of President Wheeler--

Riess: Frank Stevens?

Wilson: Yes, Frank Stevens was the man, I think, who did it for years. I came into it, I guess, in 1946 or 1947 when Fred Harris, chairman of dramatic art, was also chairman of the Committee on Public

Wilson: Ceremonies. President Sproul, as I told you, had asked me to redo the reception. Then I guess Fred Harris asked me to be on the public ceremonies committee. I wasn't chairman at that time. Within a year or two, he retired from the committee completely and President Sproul said to me, "Don't you think it would be easier if you were chairman because you're doing these things for me anyway?" [laughter] So that's when I got on it.

At the beginning, the staff for public ceremonies were regular staff members of the then registrar's office who, when a big event was scheduled, had to drop their duties in the registrar's office and devote their duties to public ceremonies. There was one administrative assistant, however, who was full-time. When I first came on the committee, it was Mrs. Mullins's predecessor, whose name I've forgotten. When I became chairman it was the late Margery Mullins, who just died last year of cancer. She had a little cubbyhole off the registrar's office. As things got more complicated, the registrar became increasingly unhappy furnishing the staff. So eventually the public ceremonies office was separated from the registrar's office and then I was given a secretary and an administrative assistant.

We don't have a large permanent staff. Nobody from the registrar's helps us. We have the administrative assistant, plus a part-time person, plus (if we're doing some big event) we can hire general assistants extra. But there's a lot of volunteer work done in public ceremonies, considering we use the time of people who are getting paid from other functions, other offices, completely, and we get lots of time from faculty members who just volunteer like Jerry Thomas. So that has been the evolution.

Riess: You were on a State Coordinating Committee for Public Ceremonies at one point.

Wilson: Yes, that lasted only a little time. It was too expensive to meet, as I recall. Each campus wanted to develop its own traditions and do things in its own way and so not a great deal was done and it didn't last a very long time. What has remained is a feeling of friendliness between the various committees and a willingness to communicate if you have a problem. The UCLA chairman will call me and ask my advice, or I will call him and ask him, and we exchange ideas and borrow ideas, but more on the basis of when we need something rather than on the basis of regularly meeting.

UCLA is exceedingly proud of their own traditions. Waldo Phelps, who used to be a professor of speech, is my counterpart down there, and it happens that Waldo and I are good friends and can talk on a person-to-person basis and it does not have to be an official UCLA

Wilson: request for advice. We have copied some things that they do. When Charles Hitch was inaugurated as the president at UCLA they wanted to give it an all-campus flavor, an all-university flavor. They had a choral group from Santa Barbara sing there. They invited me to come down and announce the academic processions and so on. For the past several years all of the campuses have participated in Berkeley's charter ceremony. One year we had Waldo Phelps (he's the marshal at UCLA) march with our own marshal. One time we tried to have the faculty research lecturers from all of the campuses march together at the head of the academic procession. That has sort of fallen by the wayside now.

Riess: Is that from lack of interest on the part of the faculty?

Wilson: Yes, and lack of interest on my part. It seemed to be more trouble than it was worth.

Waldo Phelps doesn't do as much as I do in actually running ceremonies. The public affairs officer does more of the things that I do. But he is an active head and he generally always comes up to the all-university Charter Day in Berkeley.

The person who has more and friendlier ties with the campuses than I is the administrative assistant here, Terry Tough. She is a very gregarious and outgoing, friendly person. She organizes all the delegations from the several campuses who come for Charter Day. In her organization she has to call on the phone on the state tie line system and she gets chummy. She knows them all because the administrative assistants are indispensable in running the university. I don't know these other administrative assistants unless they happen to call me to ask about something or unless Terry says, "I don't know the answer to that, you better talk to Professor Wilson."

My policy is that the university as a whole is prestigious enough that we can make our own protocol, unless there is something that is universally accepted. We don't have to search around and find out how Stanford does it or how Harvard does it. It's what is the way for us to do it.

Riess: Where is that "writ down?"

Wilson: Well, it was writ down long ago, I think in 1962, by the office of the regents or the president's office or something. [looks through papers] Let's see, public ceremonies. I think I revised it. [reading] "Protocol Manual, Office of the President, September 13, 1963. The recommendation was that the Committee on Educational Policy recommend to the regents that the protocol and procedure

Wilson: for ceremonies, public events, and social occasions as set forth in the attached be adopted." It was approved in principle as a guide on September 20.

Riess: Is that very detailed?

Wilson: Quite detailed, especially on how you are supposed to treat the regents. [laughter] The reason that it is in my active file now is that I had a call from the president's office. June Smith, who is now sort of coordinating the public ceremonies in which President Saxon has to appear and who has to supervise inaugurations in case the campus itself doesn't want to do it, called me and said, "We have been talking around the office here about how nice it would be if there was a manual on protocol, if we summarized all the things we do and have been doing so everybody can share this." I said, "My dear, that is already in existence. It was done many years ago." "It was?" "Yes," I said. "Do you have a copy?" I said, "Yes." I managed to put my hand on it and brought it out. "Will you send me a copy?" "Yes," I said, "I think it probably should be updated since it was done in 1963, but it is there."

[reads] "In a receiving line, regents and their spouses will stand in the order of precedence following the principal program participants or guests of honor...On a stage or platform the regents shall in general be seated in places of honor in order or precedence alternately to the right and left of the principal program participants...The president shall perform these functions...For a reception or social event honoring the president the invitations shall be issued in the name of the chief campus officer and shall indicate that the president will be the guest of honor," and so on.

I don't know how many people are still aware that this is in existence. The president's office itself had forgotten it, and I just automatically know about these things, I've been doing it for so long.

Riess: Yes, indeed. After these events, you write it up?

Wilson: Originally when I was responsible for the president's or chancellor's reception for new students, it was the custom to make an extended report and put it in the president's files. That was a long and arduous process: everybody who had been active, all of the money that had been spent, and so on. Eventually, we stopped doing that because we had established a format that did not vary greatly.

For each public event, though, we always ask the Committee on Public Ceremonies to assist, to send in their comments on what should be done. I compile those comments, I put down my own

Wilson: comments, and then in the fall before the next big event--say the reception for new students--we have a meeting of all the committee and all of those people who help us, we go over what went wrong last year, if anything, and what the suggestions were for improving it. So suggestions for improvement are kept and then applied. The same goes for Charter Day. We always go over what were the good things, what things can we improve, and then when we have our pre-Charter Day meeting we go back over that and get new suggestions. We do that for most of the events. It doesn't involve many people often. If we've had a luncheon for royalty, Lila Carmichael and I get together and say, "This was good, this worked; the other didn't work, I don't think we should do that again."

Commencement

Wilson: We [public ceremonies] used to do the commencement exercise when it was a central, a mass commencement, in the stadium. That was another enormous task and all my committee, plus all of these other advisors and helpers, staged that. But now since decentralization came about, about sixty or sixty-five mini-commencements are staged by individual departments or schools and colleges or clusters.

Riess: Do you mean sixty right on the Berkeley campus?

Wilson: I should say so, I can give you the list of them, and within a two-week period. They're not all at the same time. This allows each event--whether it be one department, a school, or a college, or a group of related departments--it allows each unit to devise a commencement ceremony which suits them, which appeals to them, and it involves a great many other people in actually the planning of it. They use us for advice and they use us for funds.

The chancellor allots us so much--and never enough. The unit sends a budget to us which we always have to cut down according to the available funds. Then we've developed a formula in the last years based upon the number of graduates, the number of people getting degrees or diplomas, the number of faculty, the number of parents and friends and general public who come.

The College of Engineering, for example, uses the Greek Theater and they will get a bigger share from us than the department of rhetoric, for example, which may have thirty graduates, whereas the College of Engineering will have several hundred. It's as fair a formula as we can work out. It's never enough, but the departments have learned now that they have to supplement whatever they want to do with their own funds and with donations. They can count on us for only part of their total allotment.

Wilson: We provide them with what they call "the graduation scrolls." They're not the actual diplomas, of course, but it's a nice little certificate to commemorate the commencement from the University of California on such-and-such a date and wishing the recipient success in life and so on and with the signatures of several people on it. Everybody gets handed a scroll. It doesn't matter what's on the scroll, it's in your hand, and when you have your picture taken, here you have something that looks like a diploma. It's much less work for us now.

Riess: When did commencement end as it was and what precipitated that?

Wilson: I guess the last one was 1969. We had been having difficulties with student groups who demanded representation on the commencement program. The traditional two students had been chosen by a committee of faculty people who had heard tryouts and who then chose two representative students who had been student leaders and good grade-getters and all the rest of it. But I guess the last commencement in the stadium was the commencement of 1969 under Chancellor Roger Heyns, and my memory is that we had a great deal of pressure to include additional speakers.

I guess it was at that commencement that we had a walk-out; certain faculty members and certain students walked out and had a commencement of their own in Faculty Glade. This was to protest the fact that on the speaking program the third world was not represented, and various other groups were not represented.

Riess: Like American Studies and Black Studies--

Wilson: That's right. Well, there had been increasing unhappiness about this, and not only from sort of dissident groups, but also from large academic groups. How often was the College of Engineering represented by the speaker? How often were all of these other aspects represented?

Riess: Did the speakers tend to be liberal arts people?

Wilson: That's right, very much so. Then there was no chance for individual attention and that was unhappy.

The commencement in the stadium was a beautiful pageant. It was a spectacle and very impressive. We handed out these certificates of graduation to each student there and thus we had to have six or eight lines coming forward. We tried to arrange the students so that the dean of his college handed him his certificate. The chancellor would be in one line and the vice-chancellor in another.

Wilson: They and the deans of the colleges would shake hands and hand out these certificates or scrolls. So each student got a handshake and got a scroll, but it was very impersonal and it had to be done rather rapidly, mechanically.

The council of deans had discussed the idea of having a decentralized commencement a couple of years previously. Then after this commencement of 1969 Chancellor Heyns called them together and, as he would say, they bit the bullet and decided they would try decentralizing the ceremony and dividing the central commencement budget among all of the groups that wanted to have their own ceremony.

It was quite outstandingly successful from the very first year in 1970. Any group that wanted to have its own commencement could. Otherwise, they didn't have any, and where departments didn't organize something themselves, their graduates got no attention. Right off the bat, the new system involved many more people in planning to allow each department or unit to have the kind of ceremony it wanted. In that first year they varied from quite formal, traditional ceremonies to picnics at Tilden Park--the dramatic arts department chose to have a picnic in Tilden Park and put on some skits and awarded degrees and so on--from complete formality to complete informality.

Riess: Just to hazard a guess, might the dissident groups be just the ones to put on the most formal presentation?

Wilson: Well, I know the general trend. At first, in 1970, there were few formal ones because here they had freedom, they didn't have to wear caps and gowns, they didn't have to listen to boring speakers, they didn't have to do this and that, so mostly it was informal, with a few formal ones. We have had ten years experience now. We have been steadily moving back to the traditional format. Why? Because as I discovered long ago, commencements are for parents and friends, not for the students. It's the parents whose aims and ambitions have been realized and who want to see their students go through a formal ceremony in a cap and gown. Hardly anybody wore caps and gowns at first. Now the trend is to go back to caps and gowns and go back to guest speakers, although we don't have the money to pay anybody a fee as a guest speaker. To have a guest speaker, they've got to get him on their own.

The thing we insist upon and I insist upon is some kind of a reception afterward, so parents can mingle with faculty and staff and shake hands with students. They have been outstandingly successful right from the beginning because the system enables

Wilson: each unit to devise its own format and run its own show and pay as much attention to individuals as possible. And I think this is the trend of the future.

I've had many, many people write to me and ask me how we do it, and I have a formal report on what's done, with figures on how the audiences have improved since they started. [goes through notes] Let's see, the commencement in the stadium usually drew about, oh, 15 to 20,000 people. That's a big audience for a commencement. Well, when we first shifted to the mini-commencements they weren't very well publicized at that time. Individual units didn't know how to inform parents and friends, and so there were about 5,500 guests in 1969. (We get reports from each of these units after the commencement is over.) In 1979, the total of parents and friends was 25,500. So they're drawing more parents and friends than the central commencement did at its best.

Riess: You function as a service. Would it also be a university policy that they couldn't just go at it completely on their own, that there must be aspects of it that have to be approved by the Committee on Public Ceremonies?

Wilson: No, there isn't any aspect of it that we have to approve except the budget. I suppose if something untoward or vulgar or sinful occurred [laughter], we'd move in. The closest I had to that was with our school of law.

Now, the law school commencement is early. They're still on the old semester system and they do a good job in general. But there was one speaker some years ago who was evidently vulgar and facetious and the whole thing was treated with a kind of hilarious contempt. A university president from the Middle West was at that commencement seeing a son get a law degree. He came back and wrote a kindly but wounded letter to the chancellor. The chancellor immediately had to confer with the dean and so on, and they admitted their ceremony had been a bad show [chuckles] and they would not want it themselves to happen again. So that's the only kind of retroactive supervision that was given.

Riess: The people aren't generally challenging freedom of speech in a situation like that?

Wilson: No, they have complete freedom of speech. The restraints are self-restraint by their own unit. [pause]

Riess: Are you thinking of something?

Wilson: Yes, I'm trying to remember something else about the commencement business. Well, there are a few departments who still wistfully write in after the commencement that they would prefer to have the university stage a central commencement ceremony again, that something has been lost, and I agree.

I always say that the ideal thing would be to have a short degree-granting ceremony in the stadium with all of the pomp and circumstance, color and pageantry, that we had before, and no speeches there except greetings from the chancellor and the granting of degrees and so on. Then have the whole mass thing break up into sixty-five smaller things, where each unit could have speeches, the handing out of diplomas, and the handing out of honors. We discovered we have enough locations on the campus so we could do that.

Riess: Wouldn't it be a nightmare of logistics?

Wilson: Well, it could be. We would have to find more chairs to rent and so on, but we have enough locations.

Riess: Just the cars coming up University Avenue!

Wilson: [laughter] That's right. But the expense is the prime factor. We spend all of our money now on the mini-commencements. We could do the stadium thing only if somebody gave us \$50,000 every year. It is enormously expensive. So I don't think with the belt-tightening that we've had to do that that will ever come about. The decentralized scheme has more participation and more personal attention and is popular, and 95 percent of the units feel that it is the way to go. I think it's the way other universities are going too.

The new system has given the staffs of colleges and departments a little insight into how much effort and time and work goes into a public ceremony. They were aghast when they first did it. They look longingly back on the time it was done for them. They have a good appreciation now that to have an acceptable ceremony requires an awful lot of work and thought beforehand, so that's a gain.

Charter Day, 1980

Wilson: Now we have a format for Charter Days which works pretty well. The Charter Day just concluded kept to my ideal time schedule as close as I can expect. I had said I hoped we could get the processions all in and seated and that President Saxon could go to the microphone to start the meeting at 2:30. He was able to get to the

Wilson: microphone at 2:28, two minutes early. I timed all the program and I said I had hoped it would end at 3:45. It ended at 3:44. So we were within one minute of my ideal time schedule. That meant the speakers kept within their time limits and things ran fairly smoothly, even with the minor interruptions which we now come to expect.

Riess: You must roll a tired eye at those things [interruptions]!

Wilson: I have an enormous admiration for our police force, because there was very tight security and very expert handling of those incidents really. In fact, one incident which occurred on the north side of the Greek Theater I didn't even see, but I was told about it by a freshman friend of mine, Kevin Lockey, who was attending his first charter exercises. Close to him a woman stood up, pulled out an American flag from her purse, lit her cigarette lighter, and was going to burn the flag. Before she could get the thing lighted, Kevin had grabbed one arm and a policeman, who had appeared from nowhere, grabbed the flag.

Then the red brigade on the other side tried to unroll a banner and one of our alumni grabbed it and wouldn't let them unroll it and before they could do it, why, the police were there.

Riess: The plainclothesmen.

Wilson: Yes.

Riess: Is that standard, to have plainclothesmen?

Wilson: Yes. Oh, that's much less inflammatory.

The female who stood up from the center of the theater, in that long red cloak, and screamed at the ambassador [Ambassador Kenneth Taylor] something about "what are you going to do about getting me back to Iran?" [wearing a mask of the Shah of Iran]--she saw these other incidents and decided she better leave.

The "good guys," I'll call them, now are unwilling to have their afternoon spoiled by a tiny minority of fanatics who want to get themselves on television. If a freshman on one side of the theater will protect the flag and an old alumni on the other will prevent the red brigade from unrolling their banner, then that's fine. That's what will end the thing.

VIII THE SPEECH DEPARTMENT

[Interview 8: April 25, 1980]##

Years of Change

- Riess: When you came back to teach in the speech department it would have been the period when Gerald Marsh had taken over. I gather that Marsh, in taking over the department, had a new direction that he was taking. He was only the second chairman of a department that started in 1914.
- Wilson: That's right, and Gerry was chairman for fifteen years. He managed with a kind of a benevolent autocracy. We rarely had meetings in that immediate postwar period, which didn't bother me, but it bothered some people in the department who wanted to have a bigger say in policy and in hiring and in promotions and so on. That eventually led to a kind of a revolution in the department.
- Riess: Were these oldtime people who had been there or were they new?
- Wilson: They were mostly new people. By the time I got back in 1946 from the war, most of the old people had retired or had died. Let's see, I guess one of the senior members would be Arnold Perstein. Doug Chrétien was there and he had been prewar. David Rynin was there. He had been prewar. Ten Broek had been prewar. Ed [Edward Z.] Rowell had already retired. He was one of the good oldtimers. Ed Barnhart was one of the young ones, so was Borah, so was Don Geiger, so was Hagopian, so was Hungerland, so was Beloof, and Ostroff. So they were mostly young people.
- Riess: Had they been brought in by Marsh?
- Wilson: Yes, almost all of these people were Marsh's appointees or recommendees.

Wilson: You'll notice too that there is a great list of lecturers because Marsh wanted the speech department to be a service department for foreign students who wanted to learn English and that program of English for foreign students was under the speech department for a good many years. Eventually it was made a separate entity.

Also Marsh then was an assistant or an associate dean of letters and science and was very influential in setting up the requirements for all first-year students in letters and science, freshmen and sophomores. Among the courses that they required was a sequence, two semesters, in one of the fine arts. He had Speech 2AB, which was oral interpretation of literature, listed as one of the fine arts. He was also in charge of the advising which was over in Hearst Gymnasium. He selected mostly very intelligent, experienced seniors, members of the senior class, to advise students on their first-year program or their second-year program. A few faculty members wished to, but he didn't put the burden on them.

Well, it was inevitable that when a freshman said, "What shall I take for the fine arts?" "How about Speech 2AB?" "Great." We started to get dozens of sections in that. Hence, you'll see the listing of people here was quite impressive compared to what it is now.

Margaret Blackburn is listed as a lecturer teaching oral interpretation. Richard Dearing, Ray Grosvener, Bob Haran, and Allan Temko were teaching that.

Another requirement was an English reading and composition requirement. We've had that as long as I can remember. You had to take something that directly improved your use of the written language. The old Public Speaking 1AB and Speech 1AB were more logic, writing, and analysis than getting up before the class and saying anything. The students used to complain that the trouble with public speaking is that there is no public speaking. But the philosophy of the department at that time was that there is too much hot air peddled in the world, that you shouldn't be allowed to speak in public until you had something to say, until you had thought it out logically, until you had checked all of your facts, until you are absolutely sure of giving something that is true and accurate and important.

Riess: But their rules didn't apply to debating necessarily.

Wilson: Yes, they did. The slant of debating was always that this was going to be an intellectual discussion in which you don't try to make points. You try to present the most logical arguments and

Wilson: the best evidence for your side of the question, and you can admit that your opponents have the edge here and there. You don't try to just defeat them in everything. No, that was consistent.

The department was a very, kind of catholic department in that we aimed--or Gerry Marsh aimed--to appoint people from many disciplines and then have them teach these basic courses. People trained in law could certainly teach our LAB course--logic, analysis, and then writing briefs on these things. Sociologists-- I see that Leo Loewenthal was listed in 1956. He's a sociology man and eventually went there. Ten Broek was basically political science. Rowell was philosophy. Borah was history.

Riess: So which section the student got would be critically important?

Wilson: Yes, and the word was around usually who specialized in what. Ten Broek was political science, but he was also constitutional law and eventually he taught two or three sections for pre-legal students only. So there was a different slant, but for a long while there was a uniform code of aims, goals, but there was not the same approach reaching these goals. The individual instructors had a good deal of freedom in what approach they took as long as they taught clear thinking, careful gathering of evidence, the ability to put yourself and your ideas down on paper and criticize them, and then eventually there was a speech or two given in those classes.

Riess: Now, you are saying that this was required?

Wilson: Well, this was one of the general requirements of the College of Letters and Science. You could take English LAB and maybe other things, but the Speech LAB course had a very good reputation. In fact, we made a lot of the other departments unhappy because we were taking students away from them.

Riess: So it was an alternative to English LAB?

Wilson: Yes, that's right.

Riess: But then the oral interpretation was an elective?

Wilson: That fulfilled another requirement in letters and science.

Riess: In your essay on the growth of oral interpretation [appended] you say that in the postwar period, the people who were teaching oral interpretation got together to really clearly define what they were doing.

Wilson: Yes, that's right. We all had a definite philosophy in oral interpretation, as I stated there, that the values of poetry are best communicated orally, that all literature originally was oral. Stories were told, poems were sung, plays were spoken and acted, long before there was any written literature.

Wilson: We went through a stage in the early part of the 20th century where you forgot that literature was an art which was addressed to the ear of the audience. It came to be thought of as something that was looked at on a page, but if you spend all of your time just looking at words you miss the rich beauty of the language. You miss the whole sound combination which a poet puts in. I used to try to get my students interested by reading various lines. You could always use Poe: his poem "The Bell," of course, is an imitation of bells. That's a good illustration, but there are so many subtleties in the sound pattern of a poem which you don't realize unless you read it aloud.

The end of an Emily Dickinson poem goes (the last stanza of a three-stanza poem): "Grand go the years in a crescent above them,/ Worlds scoop their arcs and firmaments row,/ Diadems drop and doges surrender,/ Soundless as dots on a disc of snow." Now, that's beautifully composed just for the sounds, the combination of sounds. Unless you recognize that, you're missing, oh, a great deal of the beauty of poetry. Our stance always was that the best way to achieve an appreciation of poetry and an understanding of poetry and a sharing of the pleasure of poetry, is through the oral approach, the oral interpretation. So we very stoutly maintained this and we decided on certain texts--

Riess: Not just poetry alone, was it?

Wilson: No, no. In 1A we spent most of the time on poetry. Then in 1B we got various types of prose, essays, short stories, novels, and so on, and there was a good deal of leeway to choose material which you happened to know and like, and, of course, scenes from plays. I used to start my 2B classes with Browning monologues or any other comparable monologue because when you get to dramas or short stories, you get people talking. If you had only lyric poetry in 1A, here you have the added problem of suggesting the voice of the speaker. Browning calls his monologues where there is a character speaking "dramatic lyrics" and a lot of us thought these were good to begin on. During those years we had that philosophy about oral interpretation courses.

Then, as I say, the department had people from many disciplines, which enriched the department, and when you came to take courses in the speech department you weren't confined to a single discipline. We chose material from all the disciplines and mixed them up. In the upper division, a man in political science could have a course in the rhetoric of political science. That since has been carried over.

Riess: When Marsh selected the people to join the department was it with a consciousness of this great eclectic--

Wilson: Yes, that's a good term. It was a very eclectic department.

Riess: Then what did he do to make it jell?

Wilson: The basic principles of gathering evidence, examining and weighing the evidence clearly, a good deal of logic, and the fallacies that you find in formal logic were introduced. In whatever the material, you had to subject the students to a rigorous discipline as far as straight thinking was concerned in gathering the material.

Riess: He kept an eye on what his people were teaching?

Wilson: Yes, yes.

Riess: Or was everybody given a free hand?

Wilson: No, we had meetings in which the various specialties discussed and exchanged ideas and decided upon common aims, more than on techniques for those aims and more than on textbooks. One time we decided we were going to put out a book by the department to serve the LAB course. I was assigned two chapters on gathering and evaluating material. I got mine done. Later I discovered these two chapters had been used by another member of the department whom I will not name, with a few words changed here and there, and then published with a syllabus under his own name. [laughter] Highly unethical. But the person who did it needed that prestige and I didn't say anything, although I was amused to discover this.

I guess that was during that first year I was here before the war. I was very young--naïve. I must have been an eager beaver at the time to get it done. But the book was never published. It fell by the boards. I don't know why.

Riess: In general, was there much publication that came out of the speech department?

Wilson: Not under the imprint of the speech department. Woodrow Borah is a very prolific historian of Latin America and he was publishing papers all of the time, but about the 15th and 16th centuries in Latin America. And the philosophers were publishing papers in philosophy, and the literary people were publishing papers in the field of English literature, and so on.

Riess: That must have tended to weaken the academic side of it.

Wilson: Yes. Well, and one of the criticisms was that the department didn't have any core, basic discipline, that it was--your term--this "eclectic" group that were bringing their expertise to bear on

Wilson: teaching students to think and to write and to understand poetry and to understand public problems and public law and sociological implications of speech-making and so on. But it had its virtues, and the speech department was a very booming group, yet always with this nagging criticism, "What is your discipline? What is your justification for being?"

I think Marsh believed that as long as we were serving so many students, both teaching them English and providing these basic requirements, nobody was going to destroy the department. And he was right. But the department got restless and there was finally a confrontation with Marsh during which he, with great dignity and anger, hurt, said that he had already sent in his resignation, that these rebels in the department didn't have to worry. He wasn't going to be chairman and the dean was already looking for another chairman.

Riess: Who were the rebels in the department?

Wilson: Well, they were ten Broek--well, most of the rest of us--Chrétian, myself, Rynin, Beloof, [looks at list again] Borah, Loewenthal. They were all people who had tenure; they didn't want to risk anybody else, and it was pretty much all of the tenured people. I remember that Ed Barnhart used to come to our meetings when we planned strategy, but wasn't very enthusiastic about the thing. The rest were pretty solidly united that it was time for a change in the department. Marsh beat us to it by resigning, but it was because of his awareness that this was going on and so he was a very hurt and hostile man for several years. He gradually got over it.

Riess: The impetus for changing the department was the feeling of the rebels that it was really a weak reed?

Wilson: Well, not necessarily that it was a weak reed, but the department needed to think through its curriculum more carefully and make changes and try to achieve some more unity than it had and to encourage more scholarship, more writing. You see, Marsh was a brilliant teacher and a brilliant administrator too. But he never published a thing, I think; maybe one article.

I was told that he remained an associate professor for years. Different promotion committees tried their hardest to find some reason to promote him. He finally was promoted to full professorship, but he was in the associate professorship for many, many years because he refused to write. Well, if you're the chairman refusing to write, saying that it was nonsense and tripe and so on, well, there wasn't much encouragement for the rest.

Wilson: I'm glad he was promoted because for his university service and his teaching and administration he certainly deserved it.

Our recommendation was that ten Broek be the new chairman, and he was appointed the new chairman. Then under ten Broek there was a good deal of curriculum revision.

Riess: Let's talk about the direction he took then, the re-orientation period.

Wilson: Well, we had lots of meetings discussing what our core discipline should be and how the existing courses needed to be changed and analyzing how men who were basically in philosophy could contribute to the speech department.

Riess: Are you talking about joint appointments now?

Wilson: To re-orient their own research into philosophical problems in the areas of speech--although there was so much going on at that time and the university was growing so fast, enrollments were swelling, so that we weren't in any real danger.

The budgets were very ample in the postwar period. The State of California had built up an enormous surplus. Earl Warren was the governor and he was one of the loyalest graduates of the University of California. I've heard stories--at this time I was working for Sproul--how settling the budget was a matter (and this may be apocryphal) of Sproul calling Warren and saying, "Well, next year we'll need x-number of millions." Warren would say, "I don't think that's enough. We ought to put in another 10 million here and there," and that's the way it got through.

I am told, and I think this is authoritative, that when Mt. Hamilton (Lick Observatory) decided they wanted a new huge reflector telescope, they were afraid to ask for the millions they knew it would cost, and so they thought they'd take it in stages. They asked for a modest amount and according to the story I heard, Governor Warren called Sproul and said, "You can't get a telescope for that amount! How much do you need?" Sproul said, "We'd probably have to have 10 million." "All right, let's ask for 10 million!" And they got the telescope; they got, I think, the reflector that Mt. Palomar had rejected.

Anyway, with that budget you could hire extra people, extra lecturers, and take care of the enrollment. The money was there and the postwar prosperity kept the money coming in. So during that time a great deal was going on. The realignment came very slowly, more in the tightening-up than in a complete change as

- Wilson: happened when it became the department of rhetoric. It was still very eclectic but trying to make people more conscious of the department they were serving, trying to have them orient their writing so it advertised the speech department and being sure that the new people who were appointed were productive scholars.
- Riess: Did the oral interpretation continue?
- Wilson: Yes, that was one of the interesting things. Ten Broek had started out not thinking much about it; that is, not valuing it very highly. Then he became a convert and a very good supporter of this oral approach to the teaching of literature.
- Riess: Did any other department try to take that away from speech because it was such a success? Did English try?
- Wilson: No, English didn't, but there was a little altercation with the dramatic art department at times. I taught a course in the oral interpretation of drama and they said, "That's our bailiwick." But this was still during Marsh's time and he was a very adroit politician. They met together and drew up lines of demarcation--what subject matter the dramatic art department was responsible for, and what subject matter the speech department would be responsible for.
- The dramatic art department wanted to give a course with letters and science credit in voice and diction for the stage. Marsh had said, "By no means. In the first place, that is not a letters and science course if you're going to concentrate on voice and diction. In the second place, we will teach that as a part of a broader course." They finally had a course that was numbered in the 300's professional course series, which didn't get letters and science credit, which was speech for the stage. That was the compromise. They worked out compromises and guidelines. So the friction was minimal really.
- Riess: Are you saying that oral interpretation did not go under?
- Wilson: No, no, it didn't go under and it hasn't gone under yet because there's a group--well, the chairman who followed ten Broek, who was a convert to oral interpretation, was Don Geiger, who was an expert in oral interpretation. Then the chairman following Geiger was Bob Belooof, who was also in oral interpretation. We've had more oral interpreters in the past twenty years as chairman of the department than we've had rhetoricians. There was a while there when the dean of L & S was very anxious I would become the department chairman.
- Riess: What period was that?

Wilson: That was fairly recently. I guess we ran out of people.

We imported Tom Sloane from the Middle West, who also was an expert on oral interpretation, and brought him here and made him the chairman of the department after one year. Sloane got very tired and wanted to withdraw. They had a big hassle and that's when the dean wanted me to be the chairman. I resolutely refused because at that point in my career I was so busy with my administrative duties and with teaching a full load I didn't want to give up any of the things I was doing, and that meant I couldn't assume the chairmanship because it was a baffling kind of job.

Riess: It sounds like it would have been a baffling kind of job. Did he want you to assume it because he thought you would have the time to turn the whole thing inside out?

Wilson: Yes, and sort of reconcile the factions that always arise in any department. I could have been the peacemaker.

Riess: It's a nice challenge actually.

Wilson: Yes, but by that time I wasn't interested in--

Riess: [laughter] In nice challenges!

Wilson: In another nice challenge! By that time, too, I was also being shared by the dramatic art department because Fred Harris, the chairman of the dramatic art department for about fifteen years, had come and asked me if I wouldn't accept a split appointment, if he could arrange it, to teach a course in the history of the American theater, because nobody else on the staff of any department was really an expert in that. Meanwhile, I had been busy writing and publishing articles, et cetera, so it was worked out. I thoroughly enjoyed that because it put me right back into the field I love to talk about. Goodness, I taught there until a year or two before my retirement.

The only reason the arrangement ended was that the budget was getting tight--this was in the early seventies--and if you had somebody retire from your department who was only a part-time in the department, that position was usually eliminated. So my old colleagues in the speech department said, "Won't you promise your last year to come back full time in the speech department so that when you retire we'll have a full-time position which they can't take away as easily as they do a part-time position," and I agreed to do that. I dropped out from dramatic art before my retirement and taught a full schedule in speech. I think they did away with

Wilson: what we used to call the "slot" anyway. [laughter] I don't think they got that because the budget now is getting very, very tight and as people retire they were just eliminating the position.

Also by the time I retired--I can't remember when the rhetoric revolution came.

Riess: Barnhart said ten years ago the rhetoricians' period began.*

Wilson: Okay, they were saying rhetoric in the classical sense is the real discipline and we are spreading ourselves over many fields where we are not really expert. We can still be eclectic: we can study the rhetoric of the novel, we can study the rhetoric of the 17th century, but approach all of these fields from this well-defined discipline of rhetoric and the means of persuasion and all of the devices that have been used since Greek rhetoricians. Law, medicine, and rhetoric, I think, were the original triad.

Anyway, we got more people interested in that and finally they had a dominant voice and decided that this would be a core of the department and they would, in fact, change the name from speech, which was a catch-all term which implied vocalizing rather than brain work, to the rhetoric department, and organize all of the courses around this classical core. So that's what happened.

Riess: I don't know how they felt safe doing that, particularly as the budget--

Wilson: They felt safe in that when they had a review of the department's standing and offerings by a committee of the graduate division, or a committee of the chancellor, they could say they had a very solid academic discipline they were teaching and that they were turning out research, reputable research, on that. They relied on that rather than just the number of students they were serving because the department shrank very markedly, partly budget and partly this re-orientation.

Riess: Is there graduate work?

Wilson: Oh, yes, yes. That was another thing. The speech department did not get graduate work. It was always an undergraduate department, as I said, a service department. But they wanted the status of giving the master's degree. So we started out giving an M.A. and

*Telephone conversation.

Wilson: we may be giving a Ph.D. now. But it was only when this emphasis on the classical rhetoric curriculum was adopted that we were allowed to offer graduate work.

Riess: So not under ten Broek then?

Wilson: No, no, not under ten Broek or Geiger or so on.

Borah, now in history, was acting chairman for a year. Somebody was on leave. I've forgotten who it was. It's strange to think of all of the people who were in other fields who then left speech as it began to zero in on rhetoric and went back to the original disciplines, like Rynin went back to philosophy, Hungerland went to philosophy. Actually, Joe Tussman had taught in the speech department for a long time. Nobody remembers that. He's in philosophy. Loewenthal went to sociology. I guess if I had had another ten years I actually would have then gone to dramatic art because that was becoming more congenial to men like Barney and me--Ed Barnhart, I mean.

Ed was never keen on rhetoric and he had his own group of majors in communications and public policy and it was a very successful group major made up of courses he taught in the speech department and then selected courses from other departments. But when he retired they did not keep that. They placed it somewhere else and I haven't followed that.

Riess: He said that he managed somehow because of that not to have to attend department meetings and he made it sound like attending department meetings was pretty--

Wilson: Hectic sometimes. At one period we had some real battles, and the battles grew more out of personalities that were not congenial than out of real differences of opinion, because as soon as one faction would state a position, the other faction just out of antagonism would have to take the opposite position.

Riess: If there were two factions, what was their essence?

Wilson: [pause] Let's see, one faction really thought that--or maybe a bit more than one faction--oral interpretation, all of the courses, both lower division and upper division, were sort of frills and this oral approach to literature didn't have much academic substance. They were always wanting to cut down on that. These were the philosophers and the sociologists, and so the oral interpreters used to oppose them.

- Wilson: They used to have some battle royals, and then there were some very uncongenial personalities on both sides; David Rynin for one could be as antagonistic and as hateful a person as I've ever seen in a department. That was eventually solved and I think it was under Geiger's chairmanship that he made a deal with the philosophy department that if they would take David Rynin, he would give up his slot, a position, and they could have David Rynin plus an extra position the speech department would give them because by that time Rynin had emerged as being somebody who was antagonistic to everybody. He was not a happy man in the speech department.
- Riess: Pepper says that in 1963 the speech department "was in rough waters and we took in David Rynin and Isabel Hungerland" and that Rynin was unhappy being a philosopher in the speech department, that Hungerland wasn't unhappy there but--
- Wilson: She was happier in the other. She always sided with Rynin. She felt the loyalty to Rynin even though Rynin had other friends in the department at first. But he managed to alienate everybody. [laughter] He alienated me early and then one by one he alienated almost everybody.
- Riess: Pepper said that when he was the chairman of the philosophy department in the period of the late fifties they had had an enormous attrition in their department and so they were out looking, searching, wooing.
- Wilson: Yes, well, they didn't have to do much wooing to have the speech department happy to get rid of Rynin and, to a lesser degree, Hungerland because she was his satellite. I think we were sorry when Tussman went back to philosophy. He was a very good teacher of logic and analysis and so on.
- Riess: What was the effect of the loyalty oath on this department where there already were divisive elements?
- Wilson: I don't recall that it had any great divisive effect on the department. Maybe we were already so much divided that one other problem didn't make much difference.
- Riess: Did anyone care in the department about the issues?
- Wilson: Oh, yes, they cared very keenly and debated it very hotly. But very few among the faculty were willing to risk being fired over this thing. They protested vigorously, but signed.
- Riess: I was thinking, here are courses being taught on speech in society, freedom of speech--

Wilson: That's right, oh, yes.

Riess: I mean it's a department that is committed to freedom of speech.

Wilson: Yes. [sighs] We felt outraged by the oath, but most of the faculty members signed it. They weren't in a position to lose their jobs. I don't remember anybody arguing that if we all refuse to sign, why, they would have to capitulate, you couldn't run the university if all of the faculty refused to sign. I don't know what happened to that. It must have been debated then.

Then and Now: Remaining an Elite Institution

Wilson: As I think of 1946, when I returned to the campus from the war, to 1976 when I retired from the department, my memory of '46 is of a burgeoning department, very eclectic and full of ideas and full of young people and swarming with students, all undergraduate students. There was an excitement in it. Then when I think of '76 I think of a very much reduced department, committed to the discipline of rhetoric in the classical sense and with many fewer faculty members, fewer courses, fewer students, and now one which has, I suppose, a higher rating among the other disciplines on the campus because it does have graduate work, and the research and the writing do bear directly on what the department teaches. It is more logical than it had been before.

Something was gained, but something was lost too in this exciting kind of multi-disciplined department with a few common ideals and goals, but with all kinds of approaches to them.

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Riess: Let's see what the current statement of purpose of the department is, as they give it in the catalogue.

[from 1980 Fall Quarter Catalogue, UC Berkeley]

Rhetoric defines the communicative relationship between author and audience. This approach to written and spoken communication, of whatever type, necessitates the consideration of the author's intention to persuade, entertain or inform the audience through some form of discourse. Modern rhetoric adapts classical theories of persuasion to all forms of discourse, and is also concerned with the extension and development of rhetorical theory itself.

The aim of the department's undergraduate program is to graduate majors who are sophisticated readers in a wide range of discourse, who can present and defend their interpretations persuasively, whether orally or in writing, and who are prepared to develop effective arguments in the areas studied, once the relevant knowledge has been acquired. Students in the major program progress from the mastery of basic skills to the study of theory and history and complete their work with refinement of both in courses applying theory to the analysis of texts. Graduate courses deal with rhetorical theory, its history, and its application to special topics.

Wilson: The department is now quite, quite different.

Riess: That's interesting. When you went to meetings of the Speech Association of America and the Western Speech Association, what were the issues that would be dealt with there?

Wilson: Like all academic conventions, there are always a series of papers read, and innumerable sections dealing with every aspect of a broad field of speech. I remember I was on panels on problems in the teaching of oral interpretation, what are the best methods to get this over, et cetera.

Riess: Did Borah and the philosophers go to conventions?

Wilson: No, not very often, just those of us who were closer to the middle western type of department where there were a lot of courses in actual oral work. Those schools had public speaking devoted to making speeches. They had voice and diction courses. They had all sorts of argumentative and debate courses. They had courses in reader's theater, and lots of courses in voice and diction. They were long in practice and did not emphasize the intellectual content of the material used. At least that's what the Berkeley department always thought.

Since we were a department in the College of Letters and Science, we felt that the intellectual content and challenges of our courses should be equivalent to any other courses in letters and science, say in philosophy or political science, mathematics, and so on. So our emphasis was on the literature involved in that and on the theory and on analysis and so on, and very little on the actual development of any oral skills, although we did have a good deal in the oral interpretation courses.

- Wilson: Eventually they did have a course actually in public speaking and making public speeches. But there you had to read intensely--at least when I was around--read intensely in some field, and your speech grew out of this intensive reading and analysis. You had to write all kinds of things. You had to send in outlines and have them tested for logic before you made any speeches. So we were kind of a maverick in the whole constellation of departments throughout the country, and very proud of it.
- Riess: In dramatic arts they also have debated whether, or how, to set up a department that involves both history and practice. How do they justify practice classes in any department?
- Wilson: Some institutions solve the problem by having a different college of applied arts or fine arts. I think UCLA does and so they don't have to measure up to the letters and science, the traditional liberal arts standards. They are a college in which you practice various arts and you receive a different degree. That is a solution in some places. But we've never gone for that here. All the music, the dramatic art, the art in itself in a broad sense, it all had to somehow measure up to acceptable letters and science standards.
- Riess: Is that the bottom line, what the dean of letters and science thinks, or has this policy come down from various chancellors and presidents?
- Wilson: It's pretty much permeated the administration. The Academic Senate Committee on Courses has to approve anything new and if you want to teach a new course, for example, you've got to submit all of the literature that's going to be involved, the kind of assignments that you are going to give, the number of examinations and the papers and so on. You've got to really convince both the committee of the college and the committee of the whole university that this is a course worthy of our standards.
- Riess: So that's the built-in safeguard then?
- Wilson: Yes. Right now one of the problems, and it's sort of a quiet problem, is these various ethnic study programs. Do they measure up to the traditional standards? I happen to know of one because I have known students taking this course, and it is to my mind shocking that students can get credit for sitting through movies and then writing a short paper. No examinations.
- Riess: Has that been submitted to this committee?
- Wilson: I think that they have asked immunity for a while to get themselves established. There has been some kind of a compromise there which I didn't follow. But I can't imagine that they passed with full colors. Maybe they're just provisionally okayed or something like that.

Wilson: But the system of academic checks and periodic reviews and very careful selection of faculty members and promotion standards and so on must in the long run have been right because during our 112 years of existence--which is very little compared to our chief rivals--in that time we've managed to challenge Harvard on almost every score. Harvard was founded in what was it--1636? We were established in 1868 and we can challenge Harvard on any level. That means we can challenge any institution in the world.

Whenever I have been in England, the friends in Oxford and Cambridge wring their hands over the fact that the Americans are doing the research, even in English literature. One man said to me, "You come to our Bodleian Library and do all of the reading and so on and then write the book and we are way far behind!" So our system here has proved itself by its fruits. The system has produced an institution which is first rate and is recognized as such in all the academic world.

The great danger now is financial starvation that is going to pull us down from the top position to a mediocre position. The administration in Sacramento bases its whole approach on limited expectations, which means a mediocre university, although all of the administrators I know are doing everything to fight back to preserve the standards, to appeal to the public, to get the money to continue an elitist institution. Of course it's an elite institution!

Riess: That's a bit of a red flag there!

Wilson: Yes, but it's elite not in the bad sense of the term, which is what Governor Brown uses it in--elite in the sense of snobbery being based on money or social position, for example. It's elite in the sense that anybody who has the brains and the creativity and the demonstration of brains and creativity is eligible here, whether you have black skin or a polka dot skin, whether you come from a ghetto or a palace and so on. It's an intellectual elitism.

Shouldn't the great state of California have a few institutions that cater to the intellectually superior student? Why make him go to a mediocre institution where the "convoy system" of education is used? I always liked that term. The "convoy system" of education [is] where the speed of everybody is regulated to the speed of the slowest. Here we've managed to overcome that and have built the University of California, a superior intellectual institution for all of the superior students that can qualify. It's not based on anything but that demonstrated endowment, and to deny young citizens of California an institution where the best is demanded of them and

Wilson: where they are exposed to the best that is thought and said in the world and is being thought and said in the world, I think that's a crime.

The Master Plan--I guess Clark Kerr was the chief author of the Master Plan for Education in California--said every boy and girl in California should have the opportunity for as much education as he wants and can profit by. It doesn't mean the same education, because we're not all equal. Some are gifted manually and should go to a trade school. I'm not gifted manually. I have a terrible time fixing a tap. Why should the person who has a real gift in manual dexterity and a mechanical knack--and I've seen some and I must marvel at their ability, but when it comes to logic or literary analysis or historical analysis they couldn't care less, they just don't respond and if you try to teach them that, they don't get it.

Well, the philosophy is that everyone should have the opportunity for as much education as he can stand--profit by--and which fits his own needs and his own endowments. Certainly pulling down the University of California and making it mediocre would be robbing those students with a real intellectual endowment, with the creative minds, creative in chemistry and so on.

Riess: At this point is it just the issue of Proposition 9 or are there more things out there that the university is having to watch out for?

Wilson: Oh, yes. My view is that Ronald Reagan demonstrated that it is profitable to campaign against the university and to make it a whipping boy and crack jokes about, well, maybe they can field a football team if they could find a way of applying cleats to their sandals!

Riess: He's so crude anyway!

Wilson: Yes, implying that they're all hippies, they're all radicals, and so on, and never once visiting the Berkeley campus except off campus at University Hall. He didn't dare to come closer.

Riess: That's parallel to his attitude about redwood trees.

Wilson: Sure, "you've seen one, you've seen them all," yes. It's like saying if you've read one book, you've read them all. [laughter] But he showed that that's a political asset, and you could make it a political asset, and Jerry Brown [Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr.] has fallen into the same thing, as far as I'm concerned. He came and criticized the university, and said the university is elitist and doesn't need more money than a third-rate institution needs and will not supply the money so we can keep competing for the best young professors in the country.

Riess: That's interesting. You would think that there would be such a strong network of alums in the state that--

Wilson: Well, I think work is being done along that line. I know that's the hope, that the alumni will put on enough political pressure saying, "We must maintain this because I have a son or a daughter who is going to college and I want that son or daughter to get the best. I don't want second rate." A lot of other politicians--isn't Vasconcellos the one that makes a lot of political hay by screaming about the university and the money it spends and so on? Of course, there is a big difference in cost between educating one medical student, and educating one undergraduate student in political science, say, a subject that can be taught in lectures, a great deal of it, and so on.

Riess: It's wrong that these disciplines should be in any sense competing for the same money.

Wilson: That's right and it's wrong that politicians should try to confuse the public by not pointing out how, as you go forward in your education and become a graduate student, how much more personal attention and supervision you need and how your tools have to be more refined and so on.

Riess: For some reason there is no appeal to people in the state that this university is the greatest state university. They get nothing out of that.

Wilson: Yes, but in academic circles you are among people who know the reputation of this university. It is very well recognized and admired. I have heard from now President Emeritus Kerr that when Governor Pat Brown was first elected he assumed that his best base of strength was in the state colleges. But according to Kerr, when he would mix with other governors and travel to other states, why, they would say, "How did you build that great university?" He realized it was a source of prestige for him and pride for him and he very quickly swung around and became a good, good friend of this university which gave him so much prestige among other states.

I think Jerry Brown is a disaster, and a bitter disappointment, because he is an educated man. I don't think Ronnie Reagan ever was. But Jerry Brown has a degree from Cal in classics and he has a law degree from Yale, both first-class institutions. He's an educated man and when we all campaigned for him and voted for him, we thought, "Here we'll get relief from the Reagan philosophy, here's an educated man who understands us and understands the needs of a great institution," and then he plays the popular side by asking everybody to lower expectations.

Wilson: He has been so quixotic and whimsical in his appointments and so undiplomatic in his statements. When he appointed Mrs. Kroeber-Quinn to the board of regents she was in her eighties, or eighty years old, wasn't she? She had been a very distinguished woman and author and so on. Well, when Jerry was asked why he had appointed Mrs. Kroeber-Quinn at that age, he replied, "She's an intellectual and I wanted somebody I could talk to on the board of regents." [laughter] How is that for a diplomat?

Riess: He really is amazing.

Wilson: To be fair I must tell you that Chancellor Bowker has said that Governor Jerry Brown is really more concerned about the university than he appears to be in the public press and in the media, that he (Bowker) has had two or three private sessions with him in which he worries over deficiency of funds and seems to give the impression that he would like to have more but it has to be spread around all of these competing agencies and institutions. I don't know that firsthand. I just heard that.

IX CALIFORNIA CLUB

[Interview 9: May 6, 1980]##

Wilson: I was introduced as coordinator of the California Club in May of 1947. I succeeded Ann Sumner of the Los Angeles campus as state coordinator. I remember the event because it took place at a university meeting (which we don't have anymore) in Harmon Gymnasium with President Sproul presiding. As a means of introducing me, he had Ann Sumner come up from Los Angeles and make a little speech about what the California Club had been doing, and then he introduced me and I made a little speech about what I hoped to be able to accomplish. But we were only preliminary.

The thing that made the meeting memorable was the fact that the main speaker was Robert Oppenheimer, the physicist and the father of the A-bomb. Anybody there will never recall what I said or what Ann Sumner said, but they will certainly recall Oppenheimer. He had a very quiet, intense style of speaking which at the time I thought was more like prayer than like public speaking.

He talked about the anxiety of building the bomb, the pressure under which they labored, the step-by-step achievement until the first actual detonation of the bomb in Los Alamos, and then the dropping of the bomb on the two Japanese cities, and then the terrible feelings of guilt and sin that all of those who were close to it experienced at that time. It was an enthralling speech.

Riess: When you listened to Oppenheimer, did you worry for him because he seemed so vulnerable?

Wilson: Well, his vulnerability and his extreme sensitivity were quite apparent. You felt a little protective and somewhat worried that this intense man now had the sense that he had created or brought sin into the world, a new monstrous kind of sin, or helped to do it. It was very apparent.

Riess: How did Sproul select you for the Cal Club coordinator position?

Wilson: I guess it was because in 1947 I had been working for him at various odd jobs and Ann Sumner wanted to resign and George Pettit said, "Why not ask Garff to do it? He's already on your staff. He is young"--which I was in 1947--"and full of ambition and vigor. He gets along well with students."

That was the beginning of it, and it occupied my life for the next twenty years. I was either coordinator, or co-coordinator, or advisor, until I resigned in 1967 in the spring because I was tired and I thought then that somebody else should assume the burden. (Many people were as good as I was and younger than I was.) Also I had been appointed to be director of the centennial celebration for the Berkeley campus for the academic year '67-'68. I knew that I needed all my energy and all of my resources for that job. So it seemed to me a very good time to end.

The Need to Reduce Intercampus Rivalry

Wilson: First I had to become acquainted with the operation and working of the California Club because it was new as far as I was concerned. I left the campus in 1933 with an M.A. degree. The club was formed in 1934 and all the recorded material says that it grew out of conversations between Hardy Smith and President Sproul.

Hardy Smith was a student who had originally studied at the UCLA campus and transferred to Berkeley. According to the official written record, he saw the need for better understanding, better cooperation between the students of the various campuses, and went to President Sproul with the idea that there should be student groups on each of the university campuses whose sole purpose would be to create understanding, goodwill, better sportsmanship, better knowledge of what went on, campus to campus. According to the record, Sproul had been thinking along those lines himself. He was, of course, the architect of the statewide university system which has proved to be a model for state after state after state throughout the union.

Riess: He personally was the one connecting link from campus to campus.

Wilson: At the beginning, but there were faculty links now, joint committees, and there were staff administrative links too.

But there weren't any student links, and the rivalries--well, I should say the rivalry--between UCLA and Berkeley was quite intense and quite bitter, chiefly on UCLA's side. UCLA was in the position

- Wilson: of being the little brother who had originally been a southern branch of the University of California and had been derisively called "the twig" by everybody in Berkeley. They finally moved out to their own campus in Westwood. They finally joined the Pacific Coast Conference in the athletic league. They weren't yet a dominant power. They were striving, of course, for their place in the sun to achieve real distinction academically and in the athletic field. But while they were going through their adolescence, they were very jealous of Berkeley.
- Riess: The jealousy was on the part of the faculty, or just of the students?
- Wilson: Well, there was some administrative jealousy and so on, and some faculty jealousy, although the history of UCLA indicates it was the people that Berkeley sent down to start the thing, to guide it, to set standards and policies, that enabled UCLA to grow by leaps and bounds in every way. They had the basic guidance from Berkeley people who went down there and became faculty members, either permanently or temporarily, to, as I say, set the standards, set the policies, which had made the Berkeley campus so amazingly prestigious in a short period of time.
- Riess: Still when people talk about Berkeley, it is the University.
- Wilson: While Berkeley is, in most studies, rated one, two, or three at every level in the country, so UCLA is now in the top twenty, and it could not have reached that position in so short a time without the guidance and the backing of Berkeley, and so the other campuses too are moving ahead rapidly because of the pattern set and because of the wise, overall plan that Sproul insisted upon, foreseeing the growth of the state of California. We have--how many?--23 million people in the state of California. It's bigger than many of the sovereign nations of the earth. So to serve that large a population, and to serve so many gifted students who would naturally come out of that population, they foresaw the need for many institutions up and down the coast.

Sproul was aware of the states that had competing institutions. (At one time, for instance, the University of Oregon and Oregon State College were separate institutions with separate boards, and I think they still are, but they now have had a coordinating board put over them. There was bitter rivalry and bitter competition for funds.) President Sproul and his officers clearly foresaw that with rival institutions springing up all over California and competing for funds there would be cutthroat politics in the legislature for the money. Well, that's no way to build an institution of superior quality. So the idea was to keep the University of California unified and have one president, one Board of Regents, and to submit

Wilson: one budget to the legislature, [the institutions] having fought out among themselves who gets what, where, and being able to place resources where it counted most, not duplicate the same resources on every campus.

For example, UCLA is the obvious place for work in television and cinematography and theater of all forms because southern California is the center of those things. Why try to duplicate that on all other campuses? The idea was to have one first-rate department in that somewhere in the state, so that if you lived in Quincy, California, and were primarily interested in that, you could go to a campus of the state university and get your specialty.

Davis, of course, since it started out as the University Farm, had specialties which were not duplicated. Is anybody teaching viticulture or enology on any of the other campuses? I don't know; they might be. But Davis is obviously the place where you teach wine-making and enology.

Since the Berkeley campus became so strong in science very early, and since we produced an E.O. Lawrence who invented the cyclotron and so on, it was here in Berkeley that the great development in chemistry and physics came.

There are certain basics which had to be taught on all of the campuses, but the Master Plan says that each campus should develop its own specialty and its own traditions and its own atmosphere and character. This was the plan for the university to keep it unified and to direct the resources where they could be best used.

This was occurring in the minds of faculty and administrators, but there wasn't any instrumentality to call the students' attention to the fact that this would be good for them in the long run. Thus when Hardy Smith went to the president he was very receptive.

Hardy Smith

Wilson: Now, why did Hardy Smith go to the president? A written record does not say anything about that. But at the 30th anniversary banquet of the California Club held up at the Macero Country Club in Davis--this was in 1964 when Clark Kerr was president and he presided, but Sproul was very vigorous still and he made the main speech--Hardy Smith himself was there and he gave a very amusing speech and a revelation of how he got the idea.

Wilson: He had transferred up here and was doing very poorly in his classes and was threatened with suspension. It wasn't because he was a stupid guy. He was just doing so many things. He said, "I've got to find some way to remain in college and not to be booted out, at least for a year. What can I do that would appeal to the president of the university and make him keep me here?"

So he conceived this idea that there should be an agency to unite the students of the several campuses. He went, and during the first talks Sproul was completely unaware that there was an ulterior motive. He got so interested in it, and he had Hardy on the first committees and so on, and by the time Sproul discovered that Hardy was about to be suspended, Hardy was so useful in this project [laughter] that the president used his influence to keep him here!

Riess: That was a day when one would have gone to the president.

Wilson: The registrar wouldn't have the authority probably to suspend the rules. But the president can. [chuckles] So Hardy thought he might as well go to the top and he did very successfully. And because there was a need for such an organization, because the president had already been thinking about it, he used the energetic Hardy Smith and a few students to get the thing started.

Riess: Didn't the alumni represent a unifying factor?

Wilson: In a way, but more in the way that Berkeley was the established, powerful alumni group with the money, with the clubs all over the world, with the information needed, and UCLA had grown out of this teacher-training institution, Los Angeles Normal School, and then it became the southern branch of the university, and so it had a lot of growing pains to go through and their alumni, of course, would be envious, jealous, weak. But by and large, there were always wise people who said, "Let's lend our experience to them if they'll allow us to help them." But they reached a point where they resented advice from Berkeley. They wanted to do it on their own.

My impression is that early in the situation if they asked for advice Berkeley could be a little snooty about it. And then Berkeley was convinced that they should help and, sure, they got a little sensitive about it. But those stages are past now. UCLA, for example, has a very strong, proud alumni organization with its own traditions and its own way of doing things, and wants no help from Berkeley! [chuckles]

The Alumni Groups

Riess: Cal alumni groups are for all the campuses?

Wilson: The California Alumni Association is one thing. That's the Berkeley alumni group. The University of California Alumni Association is another thing. That's a confederation of the separate campus alumni associations which call themselves the University of California Alumni Association, and there is a president of that who is different from the president of the California Alumni Association, which is the Berkeley association.

I believe, too, that the voting alumnus member of the board of regents is the president of the University of California Alumni Association. One year a Berkeley alum occupies that position, the next year a UCLA alum occupies the position, the third year an alum from one of the smaller campuses occupies the position. They have to rotate that.

I think it rotates within the sphere of the smaller campuses. I haven't heard any criticism of that because a smaller campus like Riverside, with its limited alumni association so far, should not have a third of the time on the regents. But I think that Berkeley and Los Angeles should. So there is a mechanism for unified action, but there is also encouragement of the distinctly campus alumni groups too. I think this kind of confederation is working out, very pleasantly as far as I'm concerned.

Riess: You were going to say something about the first meeting of the California Club that you were involved in.

The Organization of the Club

Wilson: In 1947 there were chapters. Originally they were called councils of the California Club, but they came to be called chapters of the California Club--one in Davis, one in Berkeley, one in San Francisco, one in Santa Barbara which would come later, and one in Los Angeles. During my twenty years of connection with the California Club, Riverside became affiliated. They had a chapter organized there.

An interesting sidelight is that the student body president at Riverside at that time was one Charles Young, now identified with UCLA, its chancellor for twelve years. But he was graduated from the Riverside campus. We actually initiated him in the California

Wilson: Club before there was a chapter there. Then we installed a chapter there and he was a devoted believer at that time in the concept of one university--diversity within unity. I guess his position now has demanded that he become a rabid UCLA fan. [laughter]

Riess: Actually, to think of Riverside, such a new campus, having its component twenty-five members, was there no consideration of having a sort of pro-rated membership?

Wilson: No, it was felt that it should be sort of like the United States Senate--equal representation--because other factors compensated. For example, one of the first things that developed when I became coordinator was the All-University Weekend, so-called. That was built around the annual Cal-UCLA football game in the fall. The first of those weekends was held in 1948 and we had a grandiose plan for it. The Davis campus had a football team and still has, and the Santa Barbara campus had a football team and still has. We had them play a preliminary game and then a Cal-UCLA game.

So it brought four campuses together on the football field. [laughter] Now, the medical center never had a football team so they didn't feel left out.* Riverside wasn't yet a part of the university. We had, oh, an elaborate program of parties and get-togethers and lunches and rallies for these delegations from all of the campuses. For a good number of years it was a very happy occasion. One of the events was President-of-the-University Sproul spending the first half sitting on the side of the home team and then there was a ceremony of him crossing the field to the other side.

We tried to introduce the concept that there was an all-university alma mater, namely "Hail to California." I think some of the smaller campuses still use it, but at these unified events, instead of singing your individual campus alma mater, we would all stand and sing "Hail to California," which is a very much better song than "All Hail Blue and Gold."

We also devised the concept of an all-university athlete and a trophy to be awarded to him at the half-time ceremony. Well, all that flourished for quite a long while, but eventually Davis and Santa Barbara didn't like starting the game at 10:30 in the morning! [laughter]

Riess: Well, they didn't want to be the curtain-raiser.

Wilson: No, they didn't, and I guess the last time they played on the same day was 1963. But beginning in '48 through '63, they did participate. Then they decided they wanted to have their own moment in the sun on their own campuses.

*University of California, San Francisco.

- Wilson: But the All-University Weekend went on and remained a big program. There were ups and downs, and there was a serious conflict at one time because whenever Cal played in L.A. it coincided with the UCLA homecoming where the emphasis was on UCLA and there was this basic conflict. Can you celebrate the unity of the university at the same time you are celebrating the homecoming for UCLA? I think that was finally resolved by moving the homecoming to a different occasion, so you wouldn't have conflict.
- Riess: So this All-University Weekend then was really the main spirit event the Cal Club was behind?
- Wilson: The Cal Club shared [it] with the general public, but the main event was the annual convention.
- Riess: But that was only for--
- Wilson: That's only for Cal Club members and that was a two-and-a-half, three-day gathering between terms of the glorious old semester system.
- Riess: To finish up the All-University Weekend did the students actually organize it themselves or were there staff people to coordinate it?
- Wilson: No, it was mostly myself and the other advisors. The way chapters were organized was they started out with just twenty members, but then they increased to twenty-five because there were five ex officio members. There were certain traditional positions within a student body which were so vitally concerned with intercampus events that the president said they should automatically belong to the club. They were the president of the student body, the vice-president of the student body, the editor of the paper, and then two more to be decided on each campus. What other two people are very important in intercampus work? Well, the head yell leader usually because he's the one who directs the cheering at athletic events, and you can cheer your opponent derisively or you can cheer them in a kindly fashion. There were various other positions on the other campuses.

Then there were twenty appointed students. They had to be upper-classmen (juniors or seniors) eventually. In the original scheme they didn't have to be, but later on it became necessary because they were the ones who had some influence. You had to choose people who had influence, who could say the right thing in the right places, and so they were influential campus leaders who, if the president put out a call for help over some quarrel, some bitterness, would be able to exert influence in the right places.

Wilson: It came to be considered a very great honor because you received an appointment from the president of the university. A list was always sent to him which allowed him a choice. If you had five openings for the following year, you had to send a list of at least twice as many, or three times as many, names for him to look over and decide.

Riess: Did you have to adhere to some internal rules of women and blacks and minorities?

Wilson: The blacks and minorities problem in 1947 wasn't acute. We had several black members I remember from all of the campuses, but there wasn't any feeling then that you had to allot a quota to them. They competed on an equal basis with every other student. I'm thinking now of Thelton Henderson [who] was a member. Sammy Williams was a member. But Thelton Henderson is now about to be confirmed as a federal judge at the nomination of the President of the United States. It was obvious he was that caliber of a person.

We did try to think of keeping a fair balance between the men and the women. There were usually maybe two or three more men simply because men went out to be the head yell leader and the girls didn't then. Men always ran for student body president and women didn't at the time, so many of the key positions were traditionally held by men and that made it rather understandable when you had a few more men than women.

Riess: Was it an organization that was known well on the campuses?

Wilson: It was at the time, yes. When you look at the Blue and Golds during that time, the picture of all of the members was not included in the organizations at the back. It was included with the administration pictures in the front, and it occupied a different sort of position. I had always said it wasn't an honor society, it wasn't a fraternity or sorority, it was this special group appointed especially by the president for a specific task.

Riess: It serves the president really, rather than the student body.

Wilson: That's right, and there was a little jealousy and a little friction because the California Club by-passed the offices of the deans of students. They were connected directly with the president, had a line directly to the president, didn't have to go through channels.

Riess: They didn't have to go through a dean or the chancellor either?

Wilson: No. They tried to maintain a very cordial relationship with these people and didn't flaunt their privilege of going directly to the president, but they had that and that was one of the things that

Wilson: the president liked to emphasize, that they could see him, get to him, any time just by saying that they were Cal Club members. As the university became more complex, and as the president became further and further removed from daily student activities, it became more and more important that he have this contact with the students so he could get a sense of what was going on and what students were thinking.

The Kerr Presidency

Wilson: Now, originally the main purpose of the club was to strengthen goodwill among the students of the several campuses. But by the time Clark Kerr became president--it was kind of interesting that President Sproul worried over whether Kerr would want to continue the club. He talked to me about it and at that time I was working for both of them.

Riess: Kerr was chancellor?

Wilson: Kerr was chancellor and Sproul was the president. My sense was that Kerr was much interested in this, but I never talked to him directly. So Sproul asked me to draft a letter for him saying that he (Sproul) didn't want to in any way dictate what the next president was going to do, but he would like to put a recommendation in for one organization and that was the California Club, which he had found very useful, and he gave a list of reasons why he thought it would be a good thing for Kerr to maintain.

Kerr wrote back immediately saying he certainly intended to because he had already recognized its value--and he did. He became in his way as strong or stronger an element in the California Club because he not only used it for intercampus relations, he used it as his link with the students on all of the campuses because by this time it was clear that Kerr had to be remote from any single campus. He had to maintain a kind of neutrality and separateness. But he was very much interested in students and their ideas and their activities and the guidance they can give. So he appeared more often at California Club meetings than Sproul used to. He and Mrs. Kerr took a strong part in organizing the annual convention and in directing what the convention program should be.

He also designed, in fact, a part of the separate chapters' meetings called "The question of the month," a problem he had which involved students. He sent this to each of the chapters: what do you think I should do? So they had specific problems to discuss, and would then send him their opinion and advice.

Wilson: He liked the social contacts; he liked individual students talking to him because he himself had a real relationship with the students. That developed to become an even more important function of the club than intercampus relations.

Sproul used to say, "If the club does its duty, fulfills its complete function, and creates goodwill and understanding and knowledge among all of the students on the campuses, it will do itself out of a job. It will work itself out of existence." Well, you can say there will always be some friction, but there isn't the need for that sort of activity now as there was in 1947 because now UCLA has great prestige and great pride and confidence now. They don't think of themselves being a little brother anymore. [laughter] We're starting to think of ourselves athletically as the little brother!

Riess: Do you think that is by virtue of their size or do you think it is because the Cal Club worked?

Wilson: Well, that and all of the other agencies which were created. There was an intercampus arts exchange, there still is, to bring groups from one campus to another, such as a play given by UCLA to tour all of the campuses. There is now a council of the Academic Senate where faculty members from all over the university meet in common. There are all kinds of joint committees throughout the state. The unity of the university is now so firmly established, I think, that there will never be any talk of breaking away, separating, or that UCLA would want to be independent. Now they are proud to be part of the system and they have their own prestige. But to keep the president in tune with the students and what they're thinking, the California Club would be invaluable today, and that's why it's a pity that it was destroyed.

I'm impressed by the fact that even today wherever I go in the state of California, somebody will come up and say, "I was so-and-so, a member of a Santa Barbara chapter. Do you remember?" I always say, "Yes, of course." Or "I was in that first group at Riverside? Do you remember? Oh, it was a great experience of my life." Then they say, "How is Cal Club doing?" I say, "There isn't any Cal Club anymore." "There isn't? Oh, what happened?"

What happened is this: Kerr was asked to leave the presidency in January of '67, and Harry Wellman became acting president. We had a Cal Club convention then. That was my last in '67, with Wellman as the acting president.

Riess: That was in February?

Wilson: Yes. We dedicated that convention to the Kerrs. It was a very emotional convention. The Kerrs were there, he was no longer president, but they received a standing ovation. We all felt that Kerr had done a magnificent job. He had given Cal Club wonderful attention and guidance and made it even more important than it had been before. Most of the students were not pro-Reagan and it was Governor Reagan and the regents he appointed who brought about Kerr's dismissal. So the students were passionately partisan in this case.

FSM and the Vietnam War

Riess: Had they been working very closely with him even during the free speech period?

Wilson: Oh, that's right. One time he called upon the Berkeley chapter to try to start a counter movement and it did a little good trying to rally the saner, wiser heads. But that was a phenomenon that had to run its course we now think in retrospect. But he did call upon us--I remember Kerr meeting with myself and with two or three students at the Cal Club to plot out what we might do to let reason prevail and to curtail the excesses and that sort of thing.

Riess: When you talk about it running its course, do you mean that a lot less vigorous opposition should have been mounted?

Wilson: I mean the need for reform in the area of free speech was very real, as you look back and think that Adlai Stevenson was not allowed to speak on campus when he ran for president. He had to speak from a truck parked on Oxford Street and so on.

There was no Hyde Park. It was claimed at the time that if the university gets involved in partisan politics or in religious argumentation, that sort of thing, then we lose our freedom somehow. But we now know that you can talk partisan politics as long as you have the opposition there [laughter] and discuss all points of view.

Clark Kerr came to believe that there should be a marketplace for ideas and a good idea will eventually sell itself and establish itself and a poor one will be laughed off. I remember hearing the black revolutionist Malcolm X talk in Dwinelle Plaza, a big free meeting. I went to hear him, and he started to talk such really far-out nonsense that I left, along with hundreds of students who came to listen and learn. He just lost them, except his tight little coterie in the front. He was advocating dividing the United States at that time into a section--a free nation--for the blacks,

Wilson: taking away some of the states and giving them to the blacks. Well, most felt as I do, that that's an idea whose time has not come! [laughter] And the more he talked about that, the more people departed.

But I say that the liberalization of the rules had to come, and nobody really saw that the reaction would be as widespread and as violent as it was, aided and abetted by the media and not helped by the governor.

Riess: The hindsight would be that these demands should have been acceded to earlier?

Wilson: That's right and in an orderly fashion. This more liberal policy really had to come, not only here but all over. But then along came the Vietnam War, which somehow got mixed up with the student revolt. It began as a free speech movement, but then it took on all kinds of other causes. The war was a situation in which hindsight tells us that the students were wiser than the general public.

I thought that our intervention in Vietnam was an ugly necessity, just a dirty job that had to be done. But students didn't think that, right from the beginning, a lot of them. More and more students said, "This is a hopeless thing. We have no business being there. We should get out as soon as possible." Finally the public accepted that we could never win this war, and to heck with face and pride.

Eventually I started saying, "Yes, let's stop it, let's get out as soon as possible. I don't care what the terms are, get out, get out. We are losing so much prestige in the world and we are creating so much disharmony and disunity at home that it's not worth it. There were some tragic mistakes made long, long ago. Let's admit them now. We can't win the war because we can't use the weapons at our disposal, so we're just going to bleed ourselves to death."

Well, this is what the students had been saying for so long and it took the adult world two or three years to reach that same conclusion.

President Hitch and the Club's Demise##

Wilson: The Cal Club convention of '67 was a very emotional, heartwarming experience with Wellman acting as president with the Kerrs there as special guests. It turned out to be the next to the last convention. The following January, 1968, Charles Hitch was president, and he attended the convention and was affronted by the students pinning him against the wall with their questions!

Wilson: Now, one of the most popular features of the convention was the president's question-and-answer period when the students were allowed to put any question to the president they wanted answered and really air their gripes or ask about mistakes. Well, Sproul and Kerr gloried in it because they were so good in answering, with wit, too, and if somebody was slightly insulting, turning the insult back onto the student. This was the moment when Sproul and Kerr were in their glory and they welcomed this. Harry Wellman did a very quiet, sober job of answering the questions, and the students sensed the kind of man he was and didn't try to embarrass him.

But I gather that Hitch didn't create any kind of rapport with those students in '68, and evidently they grilled him and roasted him until I'm told he just decided, "I don't have to put up with this kind of insulting behavior to my person." So that was the end of the Cal Club.

Riess: You would have thought he would think it would be particularly vital in a time of such student unrest.

Wilson: Or if he didn't want to answer questions in the fashion that had been used he could have said questions must be submitted a day ahead in writing to give him a chance to prepare. I remember one time Sproul had done that because at one convention students asked so many questions which required actual data he didn't have at his fingertips.

Riess: Yes, actually I've read that at the All-University Faculty Conferences Sproul always liked to have his questions in advance.

Wilson: Yes, so he could give a complete and authoritative answer. Kerr never did that. Kerr had the mind that retained all of these figures and facts, so he could rattle them off at will. Hitch could have done something like that, but Hitch just wasn't a man who had much rapport with students at any time, nor did he much care about it. He couldn't have cared about it.

I never worked for Hitch; I only had a connection with Hitch when it came to selecting the Charter Day speakers. Now [late sixties] we had reached a place when the other campuses didn't want to celebrate Charter Day. They want to join the Berkeley campus Charter Day. It relieves them from a lot of work and a lot of expense. So the Berkeley Charter Day becomes an all-university Charter Day. The original understanding was that Berkeley puts on the show. However, the president and the chancellor will between them decide on the speaker and invite the speaker.

Wilson: Sproul and Kerr were men who had worldwide contacts and wherever they went socially or to a conference, they always had in the back of their minds a Charter Day speaker. You meet a prime minister or you meet a world statesman of any kind and in an informal way you say, "Oh, we'd love to have you as our speaker on Charter Day. Will you come some year?" The guy will always say, "Why certainly, I'd be glad to." Then later on the question is "when?" [laughter] They were awfully good at that.

Hitch was a completely different kind of man. He didn't have these contacts or he didn't use them. So his idea of a Charter Day speaker was Wilson Riles, the superintendent of public instruction. I always feel a little irked with Hitch because the year he invited Wilson Riles was the year we had tried for a very big name (and I've forgotten who it was), but in a three-way telephone conversation, Bowker, Hitch, and myself, we had agreed that if we couldn't get this active statesman at that time, we would then go for one of the elder statesmen no longer in office, that is, Gerald Ford or Rockefeller. This was the understanding over the phone, and we knew from previous contacts that they were available. Well, the next thing I knew was that Hitch, without consultation, had called Wilson Riles and invited him to be the Charter Day speaker, so the Berkeley campus was stuck with him. I felt somewhat betrayed by that kind of behavior.

Riess: I should think Chancellor Bowker would have too.

Wilson: Well, he's such a good politician. He never said anything at the time.

But where were we?

Riess: Pinned against the wall.

Wilson: Yes, the student leaders at the time were getting feistier too. So Hitch decided that he wasn't going to put up with it and so that was the end of the Cal Club.

Riess: Did he do many across-the-board things like that? Because I should think that the first thing you do when you come in is to at least wait a year before you--

Wilson: I can't say. I can't say. I always had just remote connections with President Hitch, and in retrospect I was very glad that I had resigned, not because I knew who the president was going to be, [but] because I felt after twenty years and with this other job ahead of me, it was time.

Riess: If you hadn't resigned your position, would you have advocated and argued this with Hitch?

Wilson: Oh, yes, I should say so, and try to find a way to reconcile his point of view with my point of view.

More Club History

Wilson: Now, back to my early days with the club. When I first became coordinator in 1947, I was not the advisor of the Berkeley chapter. The advisor was a well-known professor of paleontology.

Riess: Chaney?

Wilson: Yes, Ralph Chaney, and he had been the advisor during the war years immediately preceding. He was still the Berkeley campus advisor, and I was the coordinator. I attended their meetings because I wanted to educate myself as to the group, as to what the activities and my responsibilities were. I didn't find it uncomfortable, but eventually Chaney found it uncomfortable, I think, and felt that he didn't want to have the state coordinator listening to everything he said and did. So he resigned and then Sproul said, "Wouldn't it be simple for you to be the chapter advisor?" I said, "Yes, it would be the best thing." So I became the chapter advisor too.

Riess: Had the group been disbanded during the war?

Wilson: No, Chaney had kept it going during the war because they had so many students in uniform, but they were here for a respectable period of time. No, it hadn't died on this campus or on any campus as far as I know.

When I became a Berkeley campus advisor, we evolved our own system of meetings: they were Sunday nights, once every three weeks, say, at somebody's private residence. There were always Cal Club members whose parents lived in the area and usually there was a food committee appointed to get together a potluck supper and we all put money in the kitty for that meal. We would meet and have a very sociable time and do what business had to be done at that time. It became a fun kind of meeting and different.

Let me point out that the Cal Club was one of the first organizations on the campus that was all co-ed. People accused me of being anti-co-ed. I don't think Mortar Board should have taken in men.

Wilson: Why can't there be a separate organization in which the women do their special thing? Just as I think there should be a Skull and Keys, I think it should be supervised, but it shouldn't include women, it's a men's group. But I point out I was an advisor for a co-ed group long before there was any other co-ed group on the campus and we enjoyed it tremendously.

Riess: You said Kerr issued the question of the month. Did Sproul have you working on things for the meetings?

Wilson: Not in that fashion, but if there was a problem coming up between the campuses as there was when there was this UCLA conflict between All-University Weekend and their homecoming, then he had all of the chapters busy thinking of solutions. The obvious one--move UCLA homecoming! [laughter] But it had to be done diplomatically.

Another thing was the Deming MacLise Fund. Deming MacLise was a man who died before I ever knew him, but he was an officer of the university and served on three different campuses and evidently he was an enthusiast for this idea of a unified university. When he died prematurely or too young, why, they thought that he symbolized the Cal Club ideal and so the Cal Club started to raise a memorial fund with his name on it, the Deming MacLise Memorial Fund. They got together a few thousand dollars and the income from that fund, which still exists, was to go for intercampus travel grants. If a student at UCLA needed to come up to Berkeley for a weekend to use The Bancroft Library and didn't have any money to travel, then he would apply for travel money and service money. He would get it and then the Berkeley chapter would provide him with housing and food somehow.

Riess: This would be any student on any campus?

Wilson: Any student on any campus.

Riess: And it was widely advertised then.

Wilson: Well, it was known in all of the deans' offices when the students were in trouble and they often got the deans to say, "You should apply for this"--we gave the deans the application forms--and it need not be for an academic reason, it could be extracurricular activity. If there was a conference or a student committee meeting statewide and somebody didn't have the money to go, he could apply for a grant from the MacLise Fund. Each chapter was supposed to contribute something toward the corpus of the fund each year. I think the San Francisco chapter always just assessed their members a few dollars a year because they didn't have the time to put on a show or something.

Wilson: I remember very early when Ralph Chaney went to China and discovered the dawn redwoods there which received so much publicity, the Berkeley Cal Club then sponsored a paid lecture by Chaney. He agreed to give the lecture and contribute the income to the MacClise Fund. That's the way the Berkeley chapter raised its money that year.

Usually the chapter was quite busy, like the chapters all over, organizing the All-University Weekend. After that they were very busy organizing the convention. After the convention they were busy considering the problems that had grown out of the convention to be acted upon. A program for action for a whole year usually came out of those conventions.

Riess: Where are the records of those conventions?

Wilson: A lot of them are in those files here.

Riess: Boiled down to something that's useful?

Wilson: Yes, they were boiled down to a convention report of what had happened, and that was an awful job for the coordinator after each convention. Oh, dear! I used to dread that.

Conference Themes

Wilson: In 1959 on the Los Angeles campus the theme of the conference was "preserving the advantages of a small college within the advantages of a large university."

Riess: They always took mighty big topics.

Wilson: Sure. Oh, yes, and they floundered around, but it was good to introduce them.

At the 1959 convention, there was one panel discussion: "What are the advantages of a small college which are worth preserving?" The Riverside chapter presented that. "What are the advantages of a large university which should be exploited?" The Los Angeles chapter talked about that. "Are there disadvantages of a small college which should be avoided?" The Santa Barbara chapter did that. Those were only three of the topics.

Another panel discussed: "How can the academic and the cultural advantages of a small college be preserved without losing the advantages of a large university? How can the social and administrative advantages [be preserved]?" And then, "Do the above problems

Wilson: apply to professional schools like law and medicine?"--obviously, referring to the medical center, and at that time we had a small group at Hastings. (Hastings College of Law has a strange connection with the University of California, not very close. They have their own board of trustees and their own budget and whatnot, but their degrees are granted by the University of California.)

Originally I am told that when the medical center chapter was established there were two sections of the San Francisco chapter, one located at Hastings. Then the Hastings group slowly faded away. But when Peter Goldschmidt was a student at Hastings--Pete had been the 1950-51 student body president here, a very able and hard-working guy, now our attorney in Washington, D.C., representing the university and maintaining the University of California office in Washington, a very important office not only to lobby but to handle all of the multi-billion-dollar government contracts that come to the university--well, when Pete got to Hastings he discovered there wasn't any California Club there and so he decided to revive it. So we revived it for a while, in 1959.

At the conventions, after these panel presentations, smaller groups met. Out of these things came recommendations, resolutions that the club supported which were voted on the last day.

Riess: Wouldn't it be pretty naïve stuff that you would get on broad questions like that?

Wilson: That's right, though the resolutions often came down to some practical things that could be done and were within the purview of the student bodies. Often the recommendation was to the president and could only be implemented by him. He would receive these recommendations, then would turn them over to the Academic Senate or to the committees who would have jurisdiction to discuss them and put them into effect if they were worthy ideas. In this way the students of the California Club did have an input into the actual governance of the university.

Riess: Was there then a form of communication back to the students? Would the president make a point of responding?

Wilson: Yes, that's right. The president did report what had been done with these recommendations and if nothing had been done, why.

It actually accomplished quite a bit. It took me a long while to realize this, and many students were in the club too short a time to see the long-range effects. We'd get very exuberant student leaders who might be appointed to the club as juniors and go to a

Wilson: convention, and here are all of these resolutions, and next year how many of them had been actuated? Then they'd say it's a do-nothing organization!

I learned to say, "Now, be calm. These things take time. The academic wheels grind slowly, they grind exceedingly fine, and maybe a lot of these things don't get done right away because they're not worth doing. They may seem to be a wise thing at the moment, yet they're allowed to fall by the wayside. But you just be patient and pretty soon you'll discover that there is progress. It's slow, but there is accomplishment even though you might not be around to see it." There was a contradiction in the makeup of the club. They were all student leaders exceedingly busy in some area and influential in some area or they wouldn't be members of the Cal Club. Well, now they had an added burden to do Cal Club projects.

Riess: Yes, I wondered how they could possibly--

Wilson: So I would point out to a dissatisfied member, "Do you have time? Does the student body president, does the editor of the paper, have time to devote many hours to Cal Club projects?" You do it when you can. But through these influential people, the idea of a unified university that could have diversity within the unity, that could have individuality and yet the advantages of unity, each campus having its own traditions and so on and yet some traditions in common, this idea did slowly take shape.

One of the projects of the All-University Weekend was for either the Daily Bruin or the Daily Californian to publish a special edition on that weekend called the All Californian which was devoted to talking about the advantages of the multi-university. Of course, when the All-University Weekend ended, that ended too.

Relevance for 1980?

Riess: Even though Hitch's reasons perhaps for getting rid of it are questionable, do we need this anymore?

Wilson: Well, I have asked myself that question. I know that considering 1980 and comparing it to 1947, the need for a student instrumentality to promote intercampus goodwill is far less now than it was then, very much less. It may not be needed at all except on rare occasions. The bonds now between the campuses are so very strong, the unified entity with many parts is so well-established, that nobody's going to endanger it, I think.

Riess: It's just the access to a certain group of students.

Wilson: Yes, it seems to me that the president of the university would find it most advantageous to keep that contact with the students, particularly because they are now more outspoken and more demanding. They do not say, "Yes sir, you are my elder and you must be my wiser, so what you say I will accept." The students have changed considerably.

Riess: For instance, they could inform a president on campuswide sentiment about the draft.

Wilson: Think of how useful a student organization would be to campaign against Proposition 9. If you had influential students, twenty-five of them on each of nine campuses, really infiltrating the community as speakers, writing letters, talking to editors, going to service clubs--

Riess: How do they find time?

Wilson: The Cal Club would. If there was an emergency like that, why, there was sort of an understanding that you would put off your other duties.

Riess: Your other organizational duties, but what about your studies?

Wilson: Oh, they're all very bright students! They could carry it off. Their grade point average was a factor always. We didn't take in any weak students. We didn't want that responsibility. We found students who were solidly entrenched academically.

Riess: The theme under Kerr was to decentralize, whereas Sproul was centralizing. That doesn't affect the Cal Club?

Wilson: Well, that was natural for the stage of the development of the university. Sproul had to sell unity, and then having achieved unity, Kerr had to sell diversity within the unity. They both served the long-range purpose by doing their particular thing at the particular time it was needed, I think.

Riess: The workings of Cal Club weren't basically affected? You explained how Kerr used it differently than Sproul.

Wilson: A lot of the things we did could still be useful. I remember sitting in the football stadium at an All-University Weekend and I happened to be sitting in the end zone because I had, I guess, shoved the president onto the field! [laughter] I don't know-- "Now, it's time to march" and so on! Then I went back and sat in the end zone and heard some of the people around me saying, "Isn't

Wilson: that interesting? They're part of the same university. I didn't realize that." I wonder if a poll were taken how many ordinary citizens would know that UCLA and Berkeley and so on are part of the same institution under the same president.

Riess: They could get confused because of the state university system.

Wilson: That's right, although I think the idea is probably more widespread than it used to be because so many other states have followed it. You now don't speak of the University of Texas, if you're careful. You say the University of Texas at Austin. The University of Texas at El Paso, the same thing. I just heard that an acquaintance of mine is being interviewed for a job at Michigan. I said, "Ann Arbor?" "No, it's another Michigan campus." Wisconsin has various campuses and those that have not been able to follow the California model have at least superimposed, as Oregon did, a coordinating administration so that Oregon State and the University of Oregon wouldn't cut each other's throats with the legislature.

Spirit

Wilson: One of the most charming things about the Cal Club when I was first introduced to the Berkeley chapter was the way they could entertain themselves spontaneously. I well remember one of the first parties I went to: they spent it telling stories, singing, or doing little skits spontaneously, and it developed into a most delightful evening. This was fairly true of all the chapters because one of the big traditions of the chapters was singing together.

I deplore the fact that college students today don't sing the way they used to anymore. All the Cal Club chapters sang together and they eventually devised--I meant to bring a Cal Club song book for you--they eventually put these together in a mimeographed song book. Whenever we had a convention, or on All-University Weekend, a group got together and "Number 61," somebody would shout, and you'd all turn to that and sing Number 61. The songs had been written and converted almost spontaneously, the way the old ballads were developed, into campus songs.

One of the first of these went:

"Old Bob Sproul was a merry, merry soul, and a merry, merry soul was old Bob Sproul"--to the tune of "Old King Cole"--"he called for his deans and he called for his teams and he called for his Cal Club three" (or four or five).

"Beer, beer, beer, said the Cal Club, merry, merry men are we. There's none so fair as can compare with the university."

Then it goes on, "He called for his Aggies three. We want a western wind, said the Aggies," so it will blow the smell of the cow barns away from the campus.

"We want Stanford's ax, said the Bears. Cut-ups all we do, said the medics. We want a place in the sun, said the Bruins. Let's all head for the beach, said the Gauchos."

Then you build on this and repeat. As you add one, you then repeat all of them. Then the end was, "This is a hell of a mess, said the regents," and we ended the song that way.

Riess: Here's one:

"We could have danced all night, we could have danced all night, but Garff was on the scene.

"We could have laughed all day, we could have laughed all day, but the speeches intervened."
[laughter]

Wilson: We developed this delightful song book so whenever the groups got together they sang and sang and enjoyed it and drank beer. [See "Our Fair Bob" appended]

Another feature of the convention was skits, often satirical skits about Kerr and Sproul. Kerr was always easy to parody because you'd put on a bald wig and then everybody knew you were playing President Kerr.

Riess: It was like people who would have been good at summer camp!

Wilson: It did create--at least among members of the Cal Club--a rapport and a feeling of friendliness. For example, I'd go up to Davis and see John Hardy and feel right at home. He was a good Cal Club chairman up there. I could travel all over and always meet friends. Today I still see Ed Morris at Charter Day. He has been a regent because he once was the president of the University of California Alumni Association. He's an old Cal Clubber, and so is his wife, Betty. We embrace and say, "Oh, how about the good old days." Then if I go to Los Angeles, I often meet Bill Keene, a superior court judge. He was a Cal Clubber, I remember, and we still are friends.

How the Club's Role Evolved##

[Interview 10: May 13, 1980]

Wilson: Speaking of the Cal Club last week, I neglected to say that in 1961 when I had grown weary of being both state coordinator and the Berkeley advisor, I asked President Kerr if he wouldn't relieve me of the jobs. He said that he would like to think about it. He did so and then he came up with a proposal that I keep the Berkeley advisorship but let somebody else be coordinator for the following year. He was very flattering and said that he didn't want to lose me. I had accumulated so much experience, so much know-how, I was valuable. But he said he recognized that I was weary, had been doing not only Cal Club but public ceremonies and speech writing and teaching a full load and trying to do my research. He asked Norman Miller, who is a professor of physical education, very interested in student affairs, and also the co-advisor of the Los Angeles chapter, to be the coordinator for the following year, 1962. Norm Miller later became the vice-chancellor for student affairs at UCLA and his activity with Cal Club was one of the avenues into that higher position.

Norm and I alternated as coordinator. That was the situation in the last years. In '62 to '67, '68, I remained as advisor or co-advisor for the Berkeley chapter. But I was given some relief because for a while Larry Stewart was co-advisor and for a while Dave Stewart, who was then director of relations with schools, was co-advisor. That should be a part of the record.

Riess: Did these new co-advisors or advisors affect the organization?

Wilson: They provided a lot of enthusiasm and added interest to the club.

Riess: As far as the patterns of activity?

Wilson: No, they just reinforced and revived the pattern.

Last time you asked me what were some of the resolutions or some of the projects that the Cal Club suggested which had helped the university. In thinking about it and in looking over some of the past records, I realized that during the first ten to fifteen years the club's energies and activities were mostly concerned with the single purpose of intercampus unity; that is, doing things which created a better understanding of each campus among the students of the various campuses. (I put that very awkwardly.) But their attention was focussed on things like the All-University Weekend, developing that so it became a real family gathering and

Wilson: included thousands of students; and developing the Cal Club convention so it at least brought the student leaders from all of the campuses together.

Riess: In a letter to a Cal Club nominee from 1948 Sproul said, "Experience has demonstrated that prejudices which are allowed to go unchallenged during undergraduate years may develop into serious antagonisms among alumni and from such divided spirit the university is likely to suffer." It sounds like that had already begun to happen.

Wilson: That was a constant danger and the quotation you gave was from a letter Sproul always sent to new members inviting them to belong. It was a constant danger when the club was first organized that petty jealousies and misunderstandings would lead to a split-up of the university into separate entities, and that's what Sproul was working to prevent and which he accomplished.

Now, in the record of the 1955 convention it reads that in planning the 1956 convention, "the state coordinator of the convention planning committee should be empowered to include discussion in some form of problems other than those directly affecting intercampus unity." So by '55 they were thinking they should broaden their scope. Then in 1956 there was a committee on academic and administrative problems within the university. One of the first of the resolutions of that convention was that the California Club favors registration by mail at all university campuses. The Berkeley campus office of the registrar had said stoutly that this was impossible; meanwhile, the UCLA campus had put it into effect and it worked very well, and I think that was the seed which later blossomed into having registration by mail.

Resolutions and Recommendations

Wilson: In 1959 I find that the same committee on academic and administrative problems presented to the convention a resolution which passed, recommending that the existing intercampus lecture system be extended by the appointment of all-university lecturers of the highest distinction who should spend a period of time on each campus promoting intellectual advancement and the feeling of unity. I think that was the beginning of our University Professorships.

Riess: I didn't realize they were that recent. I wonder if there was a particular case of somebody who was so choiced and they had missed him on one campus and gotten him on another?

Wilson: We could dig that out.

President Kerr often abstracted these resolutions from the record and sent them to the Academic Senate or sent them to the regents or to the proper authority, so student opinion then got directly to the person who could act on it.

In 1960, the California Club recommended that students on all campuses of the university be given a choice between taking a course or passing a test to fulfill the requirement in American history and institutions. And in that same year they said they recommended that the military training at the university be voluntary, that the content of instruction of military courses be brought into accord with the usual requirements of academic subjects, and that in the event military training be maintained as compulsory, conscientious objectors be exempt according to the regulations of the United States Congress. And that is exactly what is in effect now.

Riess: Were these posed by Kerr as questions or were they originated within the organization?

Wilson: Probably some of them had been proposed by Kerr when he assigned questions for the club to discuss and then they ended up at the convention with a resolution, but some of them were obviously generated by students.

One in particular I remember was the convention of 1964 on the Davis campus when one of the working sessions was on student housing. Regent Forbes was in attendance then and it was a lively, lively session with the students saying that the university is building monolithic dorms which do not suit student interests or desires. The Berkeley campus had been responsible for that [chuckles] and after a lot of discussion with Regent Forbes and several other deans of students who were in attendance there, the club finally passed a resolution that in the planning and construction of future residence halls for any campus of the university, special emphasis would be placed on individuality, uniqueness, and variety in the arrangement and furnishings of rooms and that fewer services be provided and more student responsibility be encouraged.

I remember how impressed Regent Forbes was, because at the end of this session he got up and said, "I promise you students that this will be carried to the regents' committee on future residence halls and that your wishes will be observed." He made an open promise.

- Wilson: That seems to have been put into effect because the new dorms that have been built subsequent to that have various arrangements: some individual rooms, some groups of rooms so a little cluster can get together, various others; and also with walls that weren't solid concrete, but had a surface maybe of beaverboard or cardboard so a student can hang up whatever posters he wants and can decorate the way he wants and the next resident can tear it down and re-decorate it. It was a very interesting and productive session the students had on that affair.
- Riess: That sounds like a situation where the different campuses would have such particular needs in that area that it would be hard to have a--
- Wilson: Uniform policy. They wanted to have it varied to suit the individual needs on the individual campuses and have it so flexible that students could pick and choose what living arrangement they wanted and what decor they wanted in their rooms rather than have it set and uniform like prison cells.
- Riess: But did they ever end up having to break into campus groups to discuss an issue even though this was an all-university orientation?
- Wilson: They didn't have to. They would take back to their own campus housing committee the ideas they had gleaned from the club convention, and put it into effect there.
- Riess: Was Regent Forbes there by invitation?
- Wilson: Yes, both Kerr and Sproul [felt] this was a way to keep certain top administrative people in touch with lively student opinion.

I remember another session in which the original chancellor of the Santa Cruz campus came and addressed a group of students as to what kind of a community should be developed around the campus, what students at that time would enjoy. That was another illuminating session. It turned out in the last analysis that students all over the state of California thought that the Berkeley community--Telegraph Avenue and the streets around Telegraph Avenue--was the ideal college community, close to the ideal college community.

- Riess: [laughter] What year was that?
- Wilson: Santa Cruz did not become a campus until 1965, so this was before 1965. It was very amusing. They didn't want a hygienically planned community. They wanted it to grow and have different student generations contribute to it. They didn't want an architect making an ideal arrangement and so on. They thought that student wishes should be the guide for the development of a community which surrounded the campus, and it turned out that Berkeley had the ideal thing.

Wilson: UCLA is coming closer to it, but UCLA was disappointed in the fact that very expensive high-rise buildings and enterprises were going up around them, making it impossible to develop student hangouts. The rents were just too high. The university should have kept that property and let the students build up the community and let small businesses come in there and not have Wilshire and all of these fancy things in. They're getting a little patina of student hangouts in Westwood Village now, I think.

I haven't been around Santa Cruz to see what has happened there. But the campus is so remote--

Riess: That's what strikes me. I don't know where they're talking about.

Wilson: Unless there had been a plan to develop restaurants and book stores and clothing stores as part of the campus on property that belongs to the university separate from downtown Santa Cruz. That may have been in the mind of Chancellor [Dean] McHenry at the time.

Another interesting thing I found [was] that the California Club in its convention in 1963 voted unanimously to support the quarter system rather than the tri-mester system, if a year-round plan for operation were adopted. And a year-round plan was adopted and we did get the quarter system. Then the whole basis of the year-round plan was nullified when Governor Reagan refused to finance the summer quarter. So we had to go back to a self-supporting summer session, and that left us with three quarters instead of two beautiful semesters such as we used to have.

Riess: Yes, that took a lot of time and energy and wasn't all that successful, was it? Then I guess the issue of tuition was something that the students must have had something to say about.

Wilson: Yes, and another interesting thing (this was in January of '64, before the Free Speech Movement) is that the club voted that some system for financing participation in University of California summer sessions for members of underprivileged groups be adopted, that greater attention be given by representatives of the campuses to high schools where students are predominantly from minority groups, that the university promote tutorial programs and camps for disadvantaged children, that the university emphasize teaching of the role of ethnic groups and their leaders in the development of American history. So the club was into that problem and it was one of the germinal proposals that got people thinking, that got people doing something. So those are the examples of the broader activities of the club which began in 1956 and carried through until the demise of the club in 1969, I think it was, unfortunately.

Riess: Has anything replaced it in any fashion?

Wilson: There is a student body president's council which meets, I believe, once a month with the president of the university in attendance. He's supposed to get some input on student thinking from that. But my feeling is that student government--the official ASUC, for example--is very unrepresentative now.

Riess: It's very political now.

Wilson: Yes, very political and very unrepresentative of the masses of students. In fact, somebody said the other day the ASUC officers represent 12 percent of the students, which is all that voted in the last election. I've observed them and they simply don't seem to be interested in university problems. They're more interested in community problems and in world problems and so on. I'm only sympathetic with that approach if they don't neglect the other.

A Place Where Students Become Leaders

Wilson: It seems to me that in the best days of the university, student government learned about the bigger problems by tackling the campus problems and discovering how complex they could be and how many points of view had to be accommodated and how you had to compromise and so on, and having had experience they'd go out in their community and tackle bigger problems and then step-by-step approach world problems. I can't sympathize with the students who say that campus problems are sandbox--"We want to save the world now!" [chuckles] "We can't walk yet, but enter us into Olympic competition for running."

Riess: To affect community understanding of the university, earlier, were there specific things that the club did?

Wilson: They would invite legislators and civic officials to a club meeting. They often invited them to various sessions of the convention to acquaint them with university problems and what the students were doing and thinking. They often sent emissaries out to the community to make speeches. I notice in some of the convention resolutions that they wanted a speakers' bureau. They sort of maintained a speakers' bureau to send good Cal Club people out to spread the gospel of a single university of the highest quality.

Then, of course, during the summers and during vacations Cal Club members were always encouraged to mix in their communities as much as they could, to go to their high schools, to accept every

Wilson: invitation, and to preach the gospel of the University of California as a single high-quality entity and to disabuse the public of many of the misconceptions that they had about the university. Such activity was always a part of the club's responsibility, but it never was as well-organized or as consistently applied as it might have been. Of course, you have to remember these were all very busy students.

I think in the long run they very steadily did a lot of good. I can take the long view of it. Students who were in there only a year or two years would wring their hands and say, "So little is being accomplished," and I learned to say, "Wait for ten years and see what happens." And as I look back over these resolutions and see how many of the things which the students voted on are now in effect, I wish that they could know it.

Riess: Do you think that the turmoil of the late '60s and '70s would have prevented an organization such as Cal Club from really pulling together?

Wilson: No, I think that if the membership was as broadly representative as it traditionally was, it would have been an ameliorating influence on all of those sharp conflicts and confrontations because there would have been a group of campus leaders who could have fought over issues and procedures maybe before they ever became a serious problem on the campus. We had the ex officio members, the student body president and vice-president, and the editor of the paper, and so on. During the turbulent years they turned out to be mostly very politically active people.

But the majority of the students, even in the troubled years, were fairly conservative. At least there were many, many students with a different point of view and who wanted things to go a little more slowly, wanted to modify the sharp confrontations and mediate and compromise and so on, and those students didn't get much of a chance to be heard. But had there been those students in the Cal Club confronting the other sharply activist students, I think together they might have worked out a better compromise, a better modus operandi for settling those sharp disputes than actually was the case.

Riess: You don't think it would have met the fate that the commencement ceremonies met of just not being the answer to enough people's needs?

Wilson: Well, it would not have--

Riess: It's not exactly a parallel.

Wilson: No, not exactly parallel, but it could have been a modifying influence, as I said. Whether it would have concerned itself with such an issue as the Vietnam War, I don't know. I think probably it would.

Riess: I think that would be exciting.

Wilson: Yes, and I think they probably would have been ahead of faculty opinion and helped to mold faculty opinion. The students who said the war was wrong, that we should get out, turned out to be correct, as I said before.

Riess: That's right and you said you also thought that the group would be very useful on something like Proposition 9. I've forgotten whether you said last time you had talked to Saxon about Cal Club, or if anyone had.

Wilson: No, I talked to Chester McCorkle, who was the number-two man in the system-wide administration for a good many years and who had been an advisor of the Cal Club on the Davis campus, so he knew all about it. He had tried to soften Hitch's attitude toward it, and he had tried to present favorable requests to Saxon to revive the club, but he said that he didn't get very far, obviously. So I decided it was no use for me to go to see the president when McCorkle knew the whole story and was a very great admirer and a very loyal member of the Cal Club.

It will be four years this fall since Clark Kerr, as president emeritus, had a reunion of old Cal Clubbers following the Cal-UCLA game. We met at his house and it was the most touching, nostalgic occasion. Everybody said, "Our experience in Cal Club was one of the richest and most heartwarming experiences we had. We felt a part of the university then. It made us feel very close to the university and bound us to the university. It acquainted us with the university's problems and with university leaders, and we had nothing but admiration for them. Now students are being denied that. What a pity, what a pity!" they all said. "Why can't the Cal Club be revived?"

Riess: That's interesting. A lot of those people who were reunioning were people who are in the university's administrative structure. I'm interested in how effective Cal is in hanging onto its good grads and bringing them back into the system. Is there a conscious grooming of people?

- Wilson: No, but Cal Club gave these student leaders an opportunity to meet the deans, the vice-chancellors, the chancellors, the president, and so on in their activities. They demonstrated their capacities for good work and for loyalty. The president or the chancellor or the vice-chancellor would say, "Let's grab this guy. He looks very promising to me. Let's put him in the office here."
- Riess: Take the career of somebody like Roger Samuelson.
- Wilson: He was a student body president, and he had other contacts too. But he was in Cal Club before he was elected ASUC president.

Larry Stewart was the yell leader and was the chairman of the Berkeley chapter and he was taken into the president's office right after graduation. At that time he was planning to get a Ph.D. in psychology. Then he shifted to law school and left the university, but they tabbed him as a comer.

Another interesting thing is that somehow they appointed young faculty members as advisors who then steadily (partly through their activity in Cal Club) climbed the administrative ladder. I mentioned Norm Miller, a vice-chancellor now. Steve Goodspeed at Santa Barbara started out as a Cal Club advisor and he's still vice-chancellor for student affairs. Elmer Noble before him was, I think, the original advisor and he became the vice-chancellor and acting chancellor for a while.

In Los Angeles another co-advisor with Norm Miller was Dr. [Charles] Speroni, who became the dean of the college of--what is it?--applied arts. I've forgotten what UCLA calls it. But he became the dean of the whole shebang of the humanities section there. Howard Shontz, who started out as an advisor at Davis, has held administrative posts at Santa Cruz and now at Berkeley. So it has continued. I sometimes am amazed that both President Sproul and Kerr chose men that blossomed into top-notch administrators. They had a canny way of picking young maybe assistant professors who came up, blossomed.

X PRESIDENTS, CHANCELLORS, AND STRUGGLES

Wilson: Sproul's major concern at the beginning was to bind the various campuses together so closely that they wouldn't fly apart, and to convince the legislature that it would be disastrous if they did separate, and to instill in the minds and the convictions of the public that it was better for the whole state to have a unified university. That has been accomplished, I think; I can't imagine any community wanting to have its own campus separate from the rest of it, and I can't imagine the legislature now wanting to consider nine budgets and have infighting up there for nine different appropriations for nine different campuses. What was a real danger at one time early in Sproul's presidency is no longer, it seems to me, a real danger.

Also, the other cause of friction between the campuses, I think, is no longer present. One campus is no longer bitterly resentful or jealous of the other because the campuses each have achieved their own identity and their own prestige. They're competing in athletics, but [with] less bitter passion than they once did. UCLA does not feel inferior any longer. Davis does not feel like they're the hick campus any longer. They have achieved status and this was also one of the basic problems which is no longer a problem.

President Clark Kerr##

Riess: Another of Sproul's ways of unifying the feeling for the statewide university was the statewide tour. Kerr felt that he didn't need to develop that grassroots support?

Wilson: He underestimated the hostility of Ronald Reagan. I remember vividly there was a Cal Club meeting of the Berkeley chapter at my house the Sunday evening before the election when Governor Brown tried for the

Wilson: third term against Reagan. Kerr attended that meeting and he was asked, "What if Reagan is elected governor?" He answered, "I think we can get along. I am not on cordial terms with him yet, but I think maybe our relationship will follow the same course as my relationship with Pat Brown." (Brown started out feeling that his real source of strength was in the state colleges and discovered it was in the university and that the University of California gave him status when he visited other states, and so he became a loyal supporter.) He said, "I think Reagan will follow the same course and I think we can compromise on issues. I don't foresee any real difficulties."

Riess: Of course, there he was, the mediator, figuring that anything could be discussed between reasonable men.

Wilson: This was in November. After Reagan took office in January, Kerr was fired as president. So he greatly underestimated Reagan's hostility and the hostility of the people that supported and elected Reagan.

Riess: And that is answering the question of whether he really was close enough to the grassroots where he might have gotten an idea of what the people wanted. Did he ever have any one-to-one sessions with Reagan, I wonder, in all of that time?

Wilson: I don't recall whether the question was asked President Kerr that night or anytime. I don't know. Obviously, if he had remained president for a while he could have sought these one-to-one sessions with the governor and probably been able to compromise and so on, but he got fired before that could be done! He was, of course, very upset and hurt by the way it was done.

He was the guest of honor at that Cal Club convention which occurred very shortly after his firing, and he told the Cal Club about how he had been asked to leave the meeting of the regents so they could discuss his status. He had gone to his office and waited and then a delegation [of regents] had come to him to offer him this: "Resign on your own, step down, and we will then give you an honorary degree and make you president emeritus and there will be no scandal." They wanted to keep it very friendly.

But Kerr said, "No way. I see no cause for such action and if you want me to leave, if you want to fire me, you'll have to take the blame and the responsibility and the onus of it. I'm not going to cover up the fact, which is that the new administration here doesn't want me. I'm not going to make them look good." So they went back and voted to fire him. Kerr [at the Cal Club meeting] then made his delightful little quip, "He took the presidency and left the presidency with the same emotion, mainly, he was fired with enthusiasm." [laughter]

Wilson: Last spring when I was called to the Santa Cruz campus to help with the inauguration of a new chancellor, Chancellor Sinsheimer, Kerr was a guest of honor at the inauguration. The following day a building was named for Clark Kerr. At the dedication luncheon he was the main speaker. So he has reached the point where he's given the prestige of the elder statesman.

He was a good servant, and he was a brilliant president in his way. I've never known a man who was more foresighted or had a sharper mind in academic matters. He didn't always judge people correctly, as evidenced in his estimate of Reagan, but he had a mind which never lost anything. He never forgot a fact. It was an orderly mind and a penetrating mind and so on.

Riess: If he had been a better judge of Reagan's character, he couldn't have done anything about it anyway, could he?

Wilson: Unless he had anticipated this and started explaining to Reagan his own point of view.

Riess: This was Reagan's board.

Wilson: Yes, sure, all of these ex officio people came in--the lieutenant governor and the superintendent of schools and so on. All were Reagan men. Then Reagan had friends on the existing board anyway. I remember that Clark Kerr told us that one of the people in the delegation that asked him to resign was Mrs. Chandler, Dorothy Chandler, and so she obviously was from the Reagan camp because she wanted to have the thing done quietly and with no ruffling of the surface of the water.

Riess: I'm sure there were things that Kerr never got a chance to do. I wonder if once he got his various master plans--

Wilson: One of his greatest contributions was negotiating that Master Plan for Higher Education in the State of California, which resulted in compromises all over but still kept the University of California as the top institution and the only one which can grant Ph.D.'s. State colleges, of course, are ambitious and wanted the prestige, wanted graduate students and so on, and they can now give Ph.D.'s, but it has to be in cooperation with a campus of the University of California.

To hammer out a Master Plan which gave the community colleges, the junior colleges, the state colleges, and the University of California system each their special province and special mission, I think was a remarkable achievement. It took a master negotiator to do that.

Riess: Well, back to grassroots. How close to them was Hitch?

Wilson: I view Hitch as a "caretaker president" whose accomplishment was to keep things together and I don't think there was any great advancement, any innovations, any real developments. But in a difficult period the best you could say for him [was] that he did keep things together.

Riess: Is that why the regents put him in? They knew him already through his vice-presidency. They didn't expect any more than they got?

Wilson: No, they knew he was a steady man who would not create any waves or advocate anything revolutionary, but would preside until the whole world situation was a little calmer. I personally regret that we didn't have a president or leadership in the regents to defend the integrity and the reputation of the university in view of a hostile governor and many hostile legislators, not just compromise with them but defend and explain and buttress the university.

When the first big budget cuts came, I understand one regent blustered and said, "We'll not accept these cuts. We must have the money we asked for or I'll go out and raise the money myself." It turned out to be only bluster. They eventually accepted the cuts without, in my opinion, a real battle for understanding and without taking it to the grassroots and organizing the whole University of California alumni apparatus to explain in community after community, from the smallest to the largest, why a great university has to be sustained and the immense advantages to the state of California in every activity--agriculture, business, the arts, the sciences, everything--how much the state benefits from it.

But that kind of effort wasn't mounted, so all of the new state officials were allowed to make fun of the university.

I think if Kerr had been able to negotiate with Reagan and been allowed a chance to do something, why, he could have organized it. It's hard to conjecture about Sproul. I'm sure he would have handled the Free Speech Movement, the whole business, in an entirely different way if it were Sproul in his prime. But whether the whole course of events would have been changed had Sproul still been president, I don't know.

When Kerr was in trouble one thing he could have done [was] ask Sproul to stump the state again as he had once done and rally the alumni groups all up and down the state in the cause of the university and of President Kerr. But Kerr was unwilling to do that and Sproul was the one man who could have galvanized the support. Kerr would have felt compromised and felt that it was a weakness in himself to call on Sproul to help him out. He is a very proud man.

- Riess: Who did he listen to? What was the cabinet of the president?
- Wilson: I guess it's his council of chancellors and also he has his own staff.
- Riess: Of course, he doesn't choose his own chancellors really, does he?
- Wilson: Yes, he is the one who recommends anytime there is a vacancy. Every president has the chance to appoint several. President Saxon has already appointed a new San Diego chancellor and the new Riverside chancellor and the new Berkeley chancellor.
- Riess: You were a special advisor. Did you say anything to Kerr?
- Wilson: No, I thought I had no opportunity. I thought Kerr had the situation well in hand. Nobody realized that Reagan was going to act so fast and so drastically.
- Riess: Did the regents act as advisors? Can they be a friendly advisory body?
- Wilson: Oh, yes, I should say so. They are the supreme authority and they can hire and fire presidents. They can certainly advise him, and the president in turn can advise the regents, and there can be a lot of give and take between them if they are friendly. That has happened in the past and it has especially happened when the regents were the caliber of men who placed service to the university above politics and above their own personal opinions and their own personal biases. The regents through most of the history of the university were that kind, carefully selected and the wisest and most unselfish of men. Regent Jesse Steinhart was that kind. Regent Ehrman was a shining example, Regent Rowell and so on. These were really big men who were community leaders, but who had this unpolitical and nonpartisan dedication to the university. One wonders about recent appointments.

But as far as my service as a special assistant, let me put into the record a very amusing incident which Sproul never knew about and Kerr doesn't know about--and I doubt that he'll ever read this memoir. At one time I was working for both of them because while I was special assistant to Sproul, after Kerr had been appointed chancellor he called me in and asked me if I wouldn't give some of my time to him. I consulted Sproul and he said, "Why, certainly. If you want to do it, it's up to you." So for a while I was working for both Sproul and Kerr doing odd jobs and public ceremonies and student contacts.

Wilson: On one occasion Sproul called me in and said, "Draft me a letter to Kerr," about this particular student problem, and I can't for the life of me remember what problem it was. He said, "I would like to get his opinion on what should be done." So I drafted the letter for Sproul; he altered a word or two and sent it to Kerr.

Three days later Kerr called me in and said, "I want you to see a letter I just got from President Sproul on a student matter." He handed me my letter. I read it carefully. He said, "Do you have any thoughts on the matter on what we should do and what advice we should give Sproul?" I said, "Well, give me some time to think about it." He said, "You think about it and draft me a letter." [laughter] So I thought about it and drafted a letter for Kerr to sign and send to Sproul, thus finding myself in the lovely position of writing to myself! [more laughter]

Riess: That's so amusing!

Wilson: Oh, it really was! I never told the story to Kerr. Maybe sometime the occasion will be right. If we both live to be as old as Joel Hildebrand. But it evidently turned out okay. I proposed the problem and suggested a solution and that was it! But that didn't often become the case.

Riess: Very tidy.

Wilson: When Roger Heyns became chancellor he, early in his tenure of office, found that we got along very well together. Of course, Roger Heyns got along with everybody. He was a very lovable person really--gentle, understanding, wise, and really very lovable. He couldn't bear to be disliked. [chuckles] When he on one occasion did something which angered me very much, he came to me and said plaintively, "Don't be mad at me, Garff. I had to do that. You don't know the pressures that were on me. Don't be angry." Well, how can you be angry with your chancellor, you know, who says this in such a friendly, gentle fashion?

Early in his tenure he decided that he didn't want to divide me up with Clark Kerr. (Kerr was still the president.) So he said to me, "Would you mind working exclusively for me?" I said, "What about Kerr?" He said, "If I could fix it up with Kerr so he didn't feel bereft, betrayed, or abandoned"--wonderful alliteration!--if he didn't feel bereft, betrayed, or abandoned, would it be all right?" I said, "Of course." How could I say otherwise? So I became the special assistant to the chancellor only, not to the president.

- Wilson: (In view of what happened later to Kerr, people have accused me of foreseeing all of this and abandoning the sinking ship, and that wasn't the case at all. It was just by chance that Kerr lost his job!)
- Riess: You must have decided that there were other people that could replace you for Kerr.
- Wilson: Of course. Kerr built up a staff and he liked to have the same people around him, people who had worked with him when he was director of the Institute of Industrial Relations. Then he brought them right over to the chancellor's office when he became chancellor, and then he took them with him to the presidency. When he left and became head of the Carnegie Commission a lot of those people went with him. Gloria Copeland worked with him for Carnegie for a long time and Kitty Stephenson. So he had a well-organized staff and they could do the things that I had been doing.
- Riess: Besides which I am sure you always leave well-organized minutes and memos on what you've been doing.
- Wilson: Yes, and in view of the fact that I would not, I think, have enjoyed working for Mr. Hitch, it was a good thing that I ended this serving two gods and devoted my time to one.

Chancellor Albert Bowker

- Wilson: We were all sorry when Roger Heyns resigned, but Albert Bowker has been a unique chancellor, completely different, and I felt fortunate meeting an administrator of his kind. I didn't think there could be somebody so entirely different from the ones I had known before.

I, outside of the search committee, was the first person to meet Chancellor and Mrs. Bowker. They were making a visit to the campus as a couple for the first time after the appointment had been given to Bowker. Their plane was arriving about seven o'clock in the evening and Chancellor and Mrs. Heyns were tied up with a dinner for retiring faculty members. So Chancellor Heyns asked me if I would take the university limousine and go to the airport and pick up the Bowkers. I was flabbergasted and said, "Why me? Why don't you send a vice-chancellor or somebody?" Roger Heyns' reply (you will see why I described him as lovable) was simply this, "Don't we want to put our best foot forward?" [laughter] What a delightful thing!

Wilson: So I went to the airport and met the Bowkers for the first time and was the first to perceive that they were very quiet people, not given to much small talk. They sat in the back seat of the limousine. I sat in the front seat and made most of the conversation. I have since discovered that although they seem quiet and even awkward socially, they are the most sociable people we have ever had at University House, that is, they give more parties, they invite more groups, they accept more invitations than anybody previous to them. So although they seem as though they are unsocial, they are very, very social.

Riess: I would have thought that coming from the job he had, he would be a fast-talking New Yorker.

Wilson: That's right, but Bowker showed me one of his devices as an administrator which is so simple and so obvious you wonder why people don't use it. He doesn't argue. You go in there with a proposition or a proposal or with something controversial and give it to him and you expect him to answer back, and he doesn't. He only listens, and at the end you finally wind down [chuckles] and he'll say, "Is that all?" You'll say, "Well, yes. What will you do about it?" And then he will tell you without any argument, "I will do this and this." Or he will say, "I'll think about it and let you know." But it's almost impossible to engage him in an argument because he won't argue. He listens.

Riess: Does that end up being a kind of passivity?

Wilson: No, underneath he's grasping everything and it's very rare that I've seen him make a decision that didn't prove to be right in the long run.

Another little device he uses is to speak in such a low voice that you have to strain to understand him. I've heard him when he could roar if he wanted to, but he just doesn't. He has given himself the reputation of being a poor speaker and so people don't ask him to come out and make big statements and so on.

He has maintained a very low profile so that if anybody wanted to snipe at him there wasn't much of a target. But that doesn't mean he wasn't aware of everything that was going on and aware of it from firsthand observation. In his unobtrusive, quiet way he will appear anyplace--to look over an auditorium that needs repairing or appear at a meeting where he wants to listen to the debate or investigate a laboratory that is run down.

The latest example: after the rains there was a section of road that supposedly slid away and they closed the road up to the cyclotron on Centennial Drive. Well, would you believe that Bowker

Wilson: walked up there by himself one day to see how bad that was? Then he didn't use this information for any purpose, but in a later conversation about jogging somebody was saying, "Why don't you be a jogger?" He said, "Well, I am kind of a jogger. Last Sunday I went clear up to the Lawrence Hall of Science." [surprised voice] "You did?" "Yes," he said, "I walked up there. I wanted to look and see how bad that road was." Now, that's typical of Bowker. You wouldn't have known it. But when there is a discussion or when there is a problem, why, don't underestimate his knowledge and his background.

Another little example. I asked him several weeks ago whether he had met Susan Farr, who is the new manager of the Committee on Arts and Lectures. He said, "No, but I know quite a bit about her." "You do? How did that happen?" "Well, she was the number-two gal at Stanford. She came so highly recommended from Stanford that I was skeptical. So I called a couple of my friends down there to find out firsthand about Susan Farr and they said, 'Yes, she deserved all the accolades that we gave her.'"

That's the sort of thing that Bowker does quietly. He is aware, he knows what's going on, and he also has the strength to make an unpopular decision, to withstand whatever criticism or fussing follows, and let subsequent events prove him to be right.

Riess: Heyns did not have that?

Wilson: It distressed him to make an unpopular decision. He did everything he could to pacify everybody. Kerr was very sensitive. He loved to be loved. Sproul was accustomed to being loved and he was sensitive too. But Bowker on the surface is willing to be disliked for a while. Now, maybe down deep he doesn't like it, but he won't show it and he will be impassive and so on, but he's had a good record of being right with people admitting that he was right at the time. Working with Bowker has been a new and enlightening experience for me because he's simply a different kind of administrator from anybody I have ever worked for before, and I'm awfully glad I did, and it's with great regret that I see him go.

Riess: Did you feel that you knew him personally, a man of so few words?

Wilson: Oh, yes, the Bowkers have been close friends of mine now, in this sense: after a function in Pauley Ballroom, say, Mrs. Bowker will sidle up to me and say, "Would you like to stop at the house for a drink after this is over?" So myself and three or four other people would meet with them and sit around the fireplace and exchange reactions and gossip and so on. That's when you see the

Wilson: Bowkers at their best, really, because in a small group the chancellor's estimate of people, his rating of people, and his knowledge of people and of politics was very keen, very sharp, and it comes out.

They've invited me to their own private dinner parties over and over again. Of course, there is not a plethora of single men to fill in at a dinner party at the last minute and so that's sometimes the reason, but sometimes it's because they think I will add something to the party.

Riess: Does he ever talk about his own style?

Wilson: Oh, he chuckles when we kid him about it. It doesn't bother him. Sure, sure, he accepts it with a chuckle.

I'm sorry they're leaving. I didn't expect him to drop out completely because when he first announced he was leaving the chancellorship he never used the term "retiring" or "resigning." He used the words "stepping down," and he insisted upon saying he was "stepping down." To me that implied that he was going to keep his professorship here in statistics and maybe come back for a term now and then--meanwhile waiting for an appointment on the board of some prestigious foundation or council--and spend part of the time in the East. They've kept a house in Westchester, I guess, in the vicinity of New York City, ever since he's been chancellor here.

I thought they would divide their time, but then I assume this offer to go to Washington came up and he was persuaded to take it.* He said at one point he was not going to go to Washington on anything less than a full cabinet-rank job. But I think they persuaded him that he would enjoy being the elder statesman, the advisor, on post-secondary education throughout the United States. And who better?

Riess: Hitch appointed Bowker?

Wilson: Well, he was recommended by a search committee. I knew a couple of people on the search committee and they very strongly recommended Bowker.

*Assistant Secretary--Post-Secondary Education.

- Wilson: During his first year here I had the opportunity of introducing him before a group of students and alumni and faculty members at a banquet, and as part of the introduction I read a statement from the man who had been his chairman of the trustees for the City University of New York, CUNY. The chairman had said, "I often read that no man is considered irreplaceable. In the case of Al Bowker I find that hard to believe." Well, I read it honestly, but there was a shadow of skepticism in my mind during that first year. But now I think Bowker deserves the accolade. He is replaceable, but his qualities, his particular style, and his particular strengths will be impossible to duplicate. You'll have other kinds of strengths and so on, but you can't duplicate his particular style and strength.
- Riess: Was there any consideration of his going on to become president at the point where Saxon came in? He would have made a fine president, I suppose, if he made such a good chancellor.
- Wilson: It would have been exactly up his alley. In his New York job he was--various components of the City University of New York had presidents and Bowker was over them all as chancellor. He didn't have to change his title when he came to Berkeley. So he would have had the experience of coordinating the activities of different units, many of which were old and strong and had their own ideas of how things should be done.
- Riess: Was there any thought of that when Saxon came in?
- Wilson: Yes, there was, but [pause] I think that Bowker--I know very little about it and I remember very little about it--but I think he took himself out of contention. I think that he felt that he didn't have strong enough backing by enough of the regents and didn't want to go through the business of winning that support. And I think he was right when he stepped down from the chancellorship by pointing out that the last twenty years of his life he'd been in top, stressful administrative positions in education and it was time that he did something else. I think he wanted a less stressful job--whether or not he's getting it remains to be seen! [laughter]

Wives##

[Interview 11: May 21, 1980]

- Wilson: The first president's wife I recall is Mrs. William Wallace Campbell, although my contacts with her were very slim. She was the president's wife while I was a student. All I remember is that she was

Wilson: an imposing lady who had great dignity and who frightened me a good deal. We met her at a tea at the president's house or a reception someplace, but I have little memory of the quality of the woman except this recollection that she was imposing and kind of frightening. *

But I certainly remember Mrs. Robert Gordon Sproul, or Ida Wittschen Sproul, because she, of course, was first lady of the campus for twenty-eight years. I was graduated from the first class over which her husband presided and I was present--I ran the commencement--at the last one where he presided. I still see Mrs. Sproul and have a very warm and pleasant association with her. She was the modest lady, very gracious and very much aware of the place she should occupy as the president's wife, that she should in no way compete with him as a public figure.

She made it a rule, and she said she had learned it from Mrs. Benjamin Ide Wheeler, never to accept any invitations to make speeches because it not only burdened the first lady with all kinds of invitations, but it invaded the province of her husband. She was to be the hostess. She was to be in charge of the household, in charge of the children, and was supposed to be the old-fashioned support of her husband. She should be there to comfort him, to converse with him when he wanted to, to give him advice when he asked for it and so on, but distinctly an adjunct and not a competitor. I think Mrs. Sproul fulfilled that position beautifully because she was always there, she set the menus, and she also had a certain feeling for privacy.

For example, when the King and Queen of Greece had a luncheon at University House, the society editors of the newspapers pestered her to find out what the menu was going to be, what was she going to serve, and she resolutely refused to divulge this private interest of hers. What she served and what went on at a private party was not public information that she needed to give out. She kept to that and she kept to no speech making.

Of course, she was always at President Sproul's side at any social event where she carried much of the burden of greeting people and of keeping the party going and so on.

Riess: I read of one event where she didn't want to be at his side. It was a dinner after the loyalty oath was over and Sproul had to go anyway and Neylan was there and it was as if all of these wounds had been healed, but apparently Mrs. Sproul didn't go because it still pained her so much.

*The president's house is now called University House and is the official residence of the Berkeley chancellor.

Wilson: Well, I'm sure that's true because the loyalty oath business was an agonizing period for President Sproul. He took the blame on himself ultimately, all of the blame, and he suffered keenly for the uproar or the bad publicity, for faculty suffering and so on--he took it all upon himself. In public he carried himself well and never showed it. I'm sure at home Mrs. Sproul saw it and I'm sure she shared in the agony and so that would explain why she wouldn't want to go and have to be hypocritical and nice to the man, John Francis Neylan, who had done the most to create a big stir over the thing.

Riess: Was it also her own education that would have necessitated this modest view of her role?

Wilson: I think that would have something to do with it because she never paraded herself as an intellectual. When, at the end of their regime, she was given an honorary degree--not an honorary doctorate but an honorary M.A. degree--and I think this had been very carefully thought out as something she would accept and enjoy. If you had given her a doctor's degree I think she would have felt that it was entirely out of place, and she wouldn't have had any fun with that. But she got an honorary master's degree and enjoyed the occasion, to my observation, very much.

Riess: Is she supposed to be the head of the faculty wives?

Wilson: She always was very good at that Section Club tea where all of the faculty wives are invited. She would consider that a legitimate function of first lady of the campus and she trained herself and was awfully good at it. She had her own code of what the first lady should be and how she should act and so on, and she perfected that role, I'm sure.

Riess: When you say train herself, that means that she would study up on a subject, perhaps deliberately bone up?

Wilson: Well, she could, but I was thinking more in terms of the fact she would train herself to be a conversationalist, train herself to meet people on a sympathetic and a knowledgeable basis. Probably she boned up on what wives were coming and what they did and what their families were like and so on, so she could establish a rapport with them.

I'm sure when she had to preside at a luncheon for the King and Queen of Greece she would have studied their background and known exactly what to say. She would have studied as a hostess their eating habits and their drinking habits and their preferences, and, of course, been up on all of the protocol that would be involved so it would all have been done very beautifully without any mistakes or slips.

Riess: Was that not handled by a secretary?

Wilson: It's handled by the protocol officer now--that's myself--and now we have a regular system if a royal person is coming--I do--of finding out as early as possible all of the protocol involved, if you shake hands, whether the ladies wear hats or gloves at tea or at a reception.

I would put all of the material in a memo and then send it to everybody involved, including the first lady of the campus and the secretary and so on. They now depend upon me to gather all of that information and distribute it among all of us who need it. But I wasn't doing it during the Sproul years. I think Mrs. Sproul did it herself assisted by a social secretary.

I think in retrospect everybody who knew Mrs. Sproul during the years does remember not only a gracious person, but a strong person and a sociable person. As the years went by, she became more talkative too. Now as an old lady she is very talkative.

About a year and a half ago two loyal alumni of the older generation had a luncheon at the Women's Faculty Club for the grandchildren of their old friends who are now in college, most of them freshmen. They wanted to give these young people a feeling of the roots of the university, the greatness of the past, and the traditions, and so they invited Mrs. Sproul and Ella Hagar to be at the luncheon, and for me to be at the luncheon.

Well, it really blossomed into a delightful kind of program because both Ella and Ida started to feel much at ease and started to remember little anecdotes. I guess I was introduced and I started to reminisce about my memories of David Prescott Barrows, and then Ella Barrows Hagar would remember something and break right in and it became a three-person presentation. The kids were enthralled with these personal reminiscences of names which are now historical names. They've never seen those people.

That's when I discovered Mrs. Sproul is now no longer reticent about speaking in public. She doesn't make formal speeches in public, but at the table she contributed a great deal. She was brimming over with memories and little anecdotes to tell.

She told me one that I had never heard about President Sproul (and I have been collecting anecdotes). When he was a student, a group of fellow students and himself were coming back to San Francisco on board the ferry. It was a Friday night, and the fog-horns were blowing every few minutes or seconds (I don't know which it is). In the back of the boat, Robert Gordon Sproul was leading

Wilson: a group in singing college songs and evidently his voice was as strong then as it ever was because pretty soon one of the officers of the ferry boat came and asked him, would he please not sing any more, he was drowning out the foghorn and nobody could hear it! [laughter] Ida Sproul swears that was an actual event.

I think a general memory that all the thousands of people who must have been guests at the president's house during the twenty-eight years the Sprouls lived there [must have] is the memory of this lady who was always lovely looking, beautifully groomed, always friendly and gracious, doing and saying the right thing, and being the ideal hostess.

She is still in circulation even though her eyesight is bad. It's been stabilized, her failing eyesight, but she identifies people more by voice now than by looks. I guess I last saw her at the luncheon for the Crown Prince and Princess of Belgium which was very recent, wasn't it? The 10th of April, wasn't it? She was a guest and I went up and said, "How are you, Mrs. Sproul?" "Oh, I'd recognize that voice anyplace, Garff. How are you?" said she.

The Bowkers were always very fond of Mrs. Sproul and included her in everything. For example, some years ago--it couldn't have been more than five years ago now--the class of 1905 had a reunion, a 70th reunion, in 1975. The Bowkers asked Mrs. Sproul if she would be the hostess at the luncheon. There are so few surviving members of that class that they had their reunion at University House and they all sat around the luncheon table which held twenty-four and Mrs. Sproul presided at the head of the table. This delighted all of the old members of the class who much preceded her, but all knew her. Then the Bowkers had invited a lot of other gregarious, gabby people like myself and Dick Hafner and Colette Seiple.

The memory of that luncheon is not only of how appropriate it was to have Mrs. Sproul there, how beautifully she conducted herself in her old role as hostess in University House, but also how delightful those surviving old people were and how they didn't have to have a program. They provided their own entertainment, before, during, and after the luncheon. There was one member of the class who had brought his harmonica and played harmonica solos. There was one man who had written two or three little poems in praise of the class who insisted upon reading them. Another man wanted to tell stories--anecdotes--of what he remembered and so on.

I couldn't help thinking how different that generation was. They didn't have radio, television, movies, automobiles, and so on to do things for them. They had learned to do things for themselves and it was still carrying over. All of us who were guests

Wilson: there will never forget that, will never forget how perfect Mrs. Sproul was as a hostess and what a tribute it was to the Bowkers who had thought of this.

Riess: Yes, it was a lovely thing to do.

Wilson: So Mrs. Sproul will have a place in the hearts of just thousands of people who knew her, and still know her.

Then Mrs. Kerr followed Mrs. Sproul.

Riess: When Mrs. Kerr was the chancellor's wife they shared some social duties [with the Sprouls]?

Wilson: Oh, yes. The reception for new students in the fall was originally called the president's reception for new students. Then when they established the chancellor (Clark Kerr was the first chancellor), they changed the name to the "president and chancellor's reception for new students" and four of them stood in the receiving line. So the new students met both President and Mrs. Sproul and Chancellor and Mrs. Kerr.

The Sprouls were still living in what was then the president's house (now we call it University House) and the Kerrs were living out in their beautiful place in El Cerrito, and even when he became president and the Sprouls moved out of University House, they decided they would keep their residence in El Cerrito because their home is situated on a hilltop and they own all of the property to the bottom of the hill and in every direction around. It is one of the most sweeping, panoramic views in the whole Bay Area because they owned it and they prevented any tall trees or buildings from growing up around them. They are beautifully enthroned there in the hills.

Riess: That is a word that one thinks of with a Hearst, hardly a Kerr. That's interesting.

Wilson: The house originally was low and up the hill and still is. After Dr. Kerr became president they added several big rooms and places for entertainment and a swimming pool and so on. But it's always kept its low profile. It's not grandiose in any respect. It's a lovely garden kind of house surrounded by greenery, and their biggest room is a garden room with lots of greenery inside. When they have a big dinner party this is where they set up the tables.

Riess: Did that date from when he was here earlier?

Wilson: Oh, yes, I think it probably dated from when he came back on the faculty and became the director of the Institute of Industrial Relations, although that would be an interesting point to find out, when he was farsighted enough to buy up this big piece of property. He's had it a long while. Anyway, Mrs. Kerr entertained as the chancellor's wife.

They then converted the president's house into University House, a kind of "Blair House" of the campus where important guests could be housed and where big functions and many social functions could be given. The Kerrs as president sometimes gave things at their residence, but the big things were more conveniently done at University House. They had the whole thing remodeled, redecorated, preserving the original feel of the house. All of the original paneling was refinished and the floors were all refinished and there was new carpeting and new drapes and so on. But the essential character of the house as a stately, early 20th century mansion, that has been maintained right through.

Riess: What is Mrs. Kerr's background?

Wilson: She is an active career person in her own right. She would not adhere to Mrs. Sproul's policy of not making public speeches. She is a Stanford graduate and was very active down on the Stanford campus. I don't know whether she took any graduate work down there, but that is where she met Clark Kerr because Kerr got a master's degree down there. She has been the woman interested in public affairs right from the beginning. One of the things that the present generation knows her for is being a leader in the "Save San Francisco Bay Movement." She has been very effective in that. She also was very much interested in various student activities and faculty activities.

For example, she was a member of Mortar Board from her Stanford days. So she became sort of an advisor and patron of Mortar Board on the campus and would always attend their initiations and their functions.

Riess: Was "Save San Francisco Bay" apolitical enough to be not a problem?

Wilson: I think her real activity in that came after Kerr left the presidency, and I'm not sure of the dates. But she would make speeches and appear with student groups, and when Clark Kerr became president she became very much interested in the California Club too, and involved in that. She always attended the conventions of the California Club and she always suggested ideas and people and topics and so on for the club. She was very helpful with the All-University Weekend, appearing as hostess for the luncheon we

Wilson: had for the Cal Clubbers, and appearing at all of the functions and helping out with the planning of the thing if we needed her or asked her. She would give ideas independently and call up and say, "Have you thought of this?" She was not simply the hostess; her role had gone beyond that. She was a partner in these activities where she felt she belonged and I'm sure the faculty wives in the various Section Clubs felt she was a very influential and contributing member. So she was more of a woman of affairs than the previous presidents' wives had been.

Then, of course, during Kerr's regime as president we had three other chancellors. When he left the chancellorship to become the president, Glenn Seaborg succeeded him and held the position for two and a half years until he was called to Washington to be chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, where he stayed for twelve years, still maintaining his professorship on this campus.

I do not have a very strong memory of Mrs. Helen Seaborg, how she performed, except that she did all of the things that were necessary to do. While Kerr was president he still liked to be in the line at the reception for new students. Since he was a Berkeley person basically, he liked to do that. So there were four people there.

When Seaborg left for Washington, Ed Strong and Gertrude Strong became chancellor and first lady. The Seaborgs had had a house in Orinda or Lafayette and they preferred to stay there and use University House as a place for entertaining guests. The Strongs didn't want to move from their Berkeley home where they were well entrenched and so they used it in the same way.

I had known the Strongs for a long time because he had been on the faculty as a professor of philosophy for many years, and they also had been members of the drama section of the Faculty Club and we had been in plays together. I knew them well as cultivated, humane people who had real standards of education and social behavior. They were, it seemed to me when I knew them, natural, simple aristocrats.

They went into high office with the aim of improving everything on the campus. I remember hearing Ed Strong talk. He gave a little speech at an initiation meeting of the Golden Bear and his theme was the passion for excellence. If there was anything he wanted to do, it was to increase the passion for excellence which always characterized the Berkeley campus. I heard Gertrude Strong say how she wanted to improve student relations and become more in tune with student groups on the campus.

The Free Speech Movement: Chancellor Edward W. Strong

- Wilson: The Free Speech Movement started then and it was a tremendous upheaval. Nobody at the time grasped what it was, what it would become, the damage it would do. I don't know whether anybody would have been wise enough at the time to know how to handle it.
- Riess: But these people were such idealists. Do you think they were particularly blind to--
- Wilson: Well, they couldn't believe that there was any--of course, I better retract what I'm about to say--that there was any conspiracy. (I don't know whether that has been proved or not.) But they were unaware of how violent the thing was going to become. They tried to moderate and keep things under control and in balance as we had done on the campus always before. But the thing got out of hand and there was real rioting. It was after the occupation of Sproul Hall when Strong finally broke down and had to call the police and have all those hundreds of students evicted and arrested. Meanwhile, public opinion was inflamed and the politicians were starting to say, "Let's clean up that mess in Berkeley." Somebody had to be blamed, and Ed Strong as chancellor of the campus got the first blame and was relieved of his job.
- Riess: In fact, what you're saying that I hadn't thought about much before is that he probably could have saved Kerr if he had been more equal to the job.
- Wilson: That's right. If he had restrained the emotional elements that took charge then and if he had compromised--because what they fought for they now have, certainly--if he had said, "Yes, we are going to change those rules about allowing candidates for the presidency to speak on the campus. We can get together and have a parliament do it or have a committee." Hindsight suggests a lot of things, but nobody thought those things were necessary until the situation got out of hand. The Sproul Hall sit-in and arresting all of those people and bumping heads down the stairs made things worse.
- Riess: At what point was Kerr starting to make the decisions?
- Wilson: He started very, very early in the thing. I think Strong was calling him all of the time and keeping in touch with him and they together were making decisions. But too little and too late, both of them.
- Riess: So you are not suggesting that Kerr would have done things differently if he had been chancellor still, for instance?

Wilson: [sighs] There is a possibility. He kept hands off as long as he could and kept in the background as much as he could and felt that he shouldn't push Strong, it was his problem. Kerr believed that as president he shouldn't step in and make sweeping decisions, although toward the end he was very much involved.

But then Strong had to go and one of the episodes which followed, early in December, was characterized by Kerr as kind of a Greek tragedy. That was when he called the great university meeting in the Greek Theater to have a structured meeting to talk about the thing and to try to pacify the students and have it all reconciled. Bob Scalapino, the professor of political science, chaired that thing. Strong was still chancellor in name, but he was conveniently ill on that day. Lincoln Constance as the vice-chancellor represented him.

I was in charge of the stage managing of it, and the night before there was a big meeting at the president's house out in El Cerrito, and Vice-President Earl Bolton called me and said, "You are to be in complete charge and give the word for anything that happens. There will not be any uniformed police anyplace. There may be some plain-clothesmen. But we won't want the place loaded with uniformed police. We want to make it as amicable as possible and you will call the signals if anything goes wrong." Had that promise been kept, the meeting might have ended in success instead of in a great uproar, because unbeknownst to me, and probably to Kerr, Earl Bolton had two uniformed policemen stashed backstage.

Before the meeting started, Mario Savio approached the chairman, Scalapino, and asked him to be allowed to speak briefly on the program. It may have been a mistake, but I remember Scalapino saying, "This is a structured meeting and we've got certain material to present and it will take all of the time. We're sorry, but we will try to arrange some other time."

So Mario bided his time. He was below the stage and after one of the last speakers, he leaped upon the stage and grabbed the mike. Well, the thing that should have been done is to make him the aggressor and have everybody back away and then say, "He's violent, we better let him do it." Instead of that suddenly from backstage appeared these two uniformed policemen. They jumped on him, wrestled him to the floor, grabbed the mike, and dragged him screaming off the stage, whereupon the whole big theater exploded. Absolutely exploded.

All the ground that had been gained was completely lost. I tried to calm things and dismissed the meeting, but everything that Kerr had hoped for was shattered. This [interview] is the

Wilson: first time I have said in public that I was so angry when the promise that had been made to me was broken--concealing those policemen backstage. I think it was Vice-President Bolton who did it and who gave the word for those policemen to come out there. I didn't. Well, it ended in disaster.

Riess: A true Greek tragedy.

Wilson: Yes, and thirty minutes later Kerr was on the phone saying, "It could have been prevented." It was a real Greek tragedy, wasn't it?

Chancellor and Mrs. Roger Heyns

Wilson: Well, we were discussing the wives, the first ladies. I was saying Gertrude Strong would have been a lovely first lady had things remained normal. But they were swept out of office and Roger and Esther Heyns came in. They were Kerr's selections and proved to be a very, very fine selection.

They came from the University of Michigan. Dr. Heyns was vice-president of the University of Michigan and had he stayed there I have no doubt he would have been selected president because President Harlan Hatcher had only a couple of more years before he was due to retire. Roger Heyns accepted the chancellorship here and was a very successful peacemaker.

Riess: Martin Meyerson was in there, wasn't he?

Wilson: During that spring of 1965 Martin Meyerson was acting chancellor. He had been dean of the College of Environmental Design and was asked to be acting chancellor, which he did, and held the campus together, and then soon went to the University of Pennsylvania as its president. I don't even remember Mrs. Meyerson or whether there was one! [laughter] But I do remember when the Heynses arrived.

Riess: If they were from out of town did you have to do a lot of educating them to the protocol?

Wilson: Yes, indeed. All of the people who had been helping to run the top office, they were all very supportive, and the Heynses were--again I use the term--very lovable people. I guess I used it when you first mentioned them.

Riess: You said he was, but not that she was.

Wilson: Esther was too. Esther Heyns was almost a contradiction in terms. She's very quiet, small, charming. She looks as though she would be a fragile and weak person. She is as strong as though she were made of steel. She told me once, for example, that she had never been sick. I said, "Now, surely you have had the flu or something?" "No," she said. "So help me, I have never been sick." "But you look so fragile!" [laughter] "I'm not," she said. She was quiet and demure almost, but, oh, so completely charming and affectionate and outgoing in her own way. She quite captivated everybody.

Riess: Where did they live?

Wilson: They loved University House. That may have been one of the reasons they accepted the job because they were told that there was this beautiful mansion that had been redecorated and so on. They came, moved in, and instantly loved it. They were there the whole time and, incidentally, the Bowkers have loved it too. They moved in. So University House again became the residence of the chief campus officer.

By now, the chancellor had become practically completely independent. The decentralization of the university had taken place under Kerr and chancellors had the power to act in almost everything. I can't quote you what powers are still reserved in the president's office. Oh, I guess I can quote one: I think the military, naval, and air science programs are still under the supervision of the president. I have been told that when Hitch was president he felt that it had better be centralized still and not be given as an option to the various campuses because he was afraid that some of the younger, more rambunctious campuses would do away with it altogether.

Riess: Exercise their option?

Wilson: Exercise their option and eliminate it altogether and then we'd be in violation of the Organic Act which said that it had to be offered. It didn't say that it had to be compulsory, but it had to be there for those who wanted it. So there may be a few areas, but otherwise the chancellor is now practically independent and by the time Heyns became the chancellor it was so. He did a great deal of peacemaking and setting up mechanisms and rethinking rules and getting the input from everybody and having procedures that would handle the upsets. There were many upsets, though, because now Vietnam was causing the students to be very unhappy, and then Cambodia came along during his regime, the invasion of Cambodia, and so there were many things--

Riess: People's Park.

Wilson: People's Park he had to deal with. But he had firmness and yet he had a gentle touch. He never roared or ranted, but he could be very firm and he was a great conciliator. You couldn't get angry at him. By and large, things erupted now and then but step-by-step came under control.

Riess: So the handling of People's Park you think was not as flawed as the handling of the Free Speech Movement?

Wilson: Oh, no, I think that the chief campus officer had learned a great deal about when to be tough and when to be conciliatory.

Riess: The People's Park issue does get confusing because the City of Berkeley was more involved. But raising the fence was certainly the university's responsibility.

Wilson: Well, it's private property and it's hard for people of another generation to believe that private property can be invaded and possessed, that squatters can exert their rights against what the law says, against what tradition has long upheld. That is such valuable land, so close to the heart of everything, and the housing on campus now is so acute, we need so many more places for students to live, that to have it a vacant lot which can't be used, why, it's one of the maddening situations.

Riess: But tear gas over Berkeley!

Wilson: That's right. It can't be done. Because now the city says it has a vested interest in all of these people, the street people. They call it People's Park. Well, I always resent that term. I'm people too.

Riess: I know.

Wilson: Well, it's a maddening situation and I'm glad I was not then chancellor or am not now chancellor. Will we always have the street people and drifters? Will we always have a city council that is radical and that suffers with the street people but doesn't suffer with the tax-paying citizens? Well, we can only wait and hope, and I think that has been Bowker's policy.

Riess: Reagan focussed in this crisis on Hitch, rather than Heyns. The situation was analogous to what Kerr faced with the FSM. Yet Hitch wasn't ruined by Reagan the way Kerr was. How did that happen?

Wilson: I think even Governor Reagan couldn't see himself firing another president right away! [laughter] He had already raised the eyebrows of a good many citizens in California by seeing that Kerr got fired at his first meeting of the Board of Regents and Hitch was okayed by him [Reagan] and he spoke at Hitch's inauguration down at UCLA. No, I think it was a little too much even for Reagan to fire him.

Anyway, Esther Heyns was not the lady of affairs like Kay Kerr. She was more the hostess, the mother, the comforter, the loyal help-mate. And I think they were honestly religious people. I think they got strength from the church and the home.

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Wilson: Modest as Esther Heyns is, I think she accepted invitations now and then to make speeches to certain groups because I remember her calling me and saying that she and Nancy Hitch would like some coaching in speech making, and was there any chance that I would be available? Fortunately exactly the right person came to mind instantly, Gerry Marsh, who had hired me years before and had been chairman of the speech department and who loved to coach ladies. Gerry Marsh was now emeritus; he didn't have much to do, hadn't stayed very active.

I said, "Oh, the ideal person is Gerry Marsh." I told her Gerry's background. She called him and Gerry was delighted to do it. He had several sessions, I understand, with Esther Heyns and Nancy Hitch, and they enjoyed it too because Gerry was the old diplomat with the ladies. Oh, he would say the right things and yet keep them happy and keep them working.

Riess: That's very resourceful.

Wilson: Here is a footnote, speaking about recommending speech coaches. I recommended the speech coach for the late Robert Kennedy when he was attorney general of the United States. Now, how could such a thing happen?

Well, the then chairman of the speech department, Jacobus ten Broek, was in Washington in favor of some legislation and he wanted the support of Robert Kennedy. He went to the attorney general, had an appointment with him. Ten Broek, who can be very blunt and forthright, put his cards on the table saying he wanted Kennedy's support for this bill, and gave him the reasons. Kennedy was equally forthright and said, "Okay, I will support you. I think you're right." So they got along fine.

"But now I've done a favor for you," he said. "Will you do a favor for me? You're chairman of a speech department. Recommend a speech coach in this area whom I could work with because I have

Wilson: various flaws in my speech making and I need some coaching." Ten Broek said, "Give me a little time and I'll give you a recommendation." Whereupon ten Broek called me because ten Broek never used to go to speech conventions. [laughter] He didn't know people in the field and asked my help.

I hemmed and hawed and thought of various people in various departments close to D.C., and it wasn't very satisfactory. But after I hung up I got to thinking more about it and I called him back and said, "The obvious person is in Washington." "Who is that?" "My former high school debate coach and drama coach."

"Oh, but come off it," said ten Broek. "I can't recommend a high school teacher to coach the attorney general of the United States." I said, "But wait a minute. She is a loyal member of the Democratic party. She was a judge in Salt Lake City. She was a member of the state legislature in Utah. She served two sessions in Congress. She is now the judicial officer of the whole post office appointed to that job by Jack Kennedy, and she is the best speech coach I've ever seen or worked with anyplace, anytime. If you can get her to do it she would be just ideal, because she knows Washington. And she's a severe critic."

Well, ten Broek called Reva Beck Bosone. Reva said, "Oh, but I'm so busy! I don't have time for my own daughter! But if Garff thinks I should coach Robert Kennedy, I'll do it." So that is the fantastic story of how I got a speech coach for Robert Kennedy, whom I've never met.

Riess: Was there any feedback? Did you hear from Reva again?

Wilson: Oh, yes, I heard from Reva. She said, "Oh, he needs much help!" [laughter] "We have a hard time getting together and finding a time when we're both free and can do it," she said. I don't know how many sessions they had. It is an amazing story and it belongs under the small world department.

Well, that was a footnote to the speech making of two first ladies, one first lady of the university and one first lady of the campus.

Chancellor and Mrs. Albert Bowker

Wilson: Now, the last first lady of the campus is Rosedith Sitgreaves Bowker, and she is a new phenomenon because she has been able to be a perfect first lady of the campus, at the same time being a

Wilson: complete career woman. She is a statistician, as you know, a Ph.D. She was a professor at Hayward State University and then was invited to the faculty at Stanford where she is now a full professor. There she is known as Professor Rosedith Sitgreaves. She spends part of three days at Stanford, the rest of the time in Berkeley, if she's not going to the meeting of some learned society someplace or doing other things. But I have never known her to slight her job as first lady of the campus.

Riess: I don't know how she can do all of that.

Wilson: That's the phenomenal thing.

Riess: She must have an enormous support system.

Wilson: She has enormous vitality--until recently. She had open heart surgery some months ago and so her activity was cut down and she will retire from Stanford next month (June), just as her husband is retiring from the Berkeley campus.

As I may have said earlier in this series of talks, the Bowkers are more sociable than anybody who has occupied University House; that is, they have given more parties, they have opened up the house to more groups, they have agreed to host more events than I remember from any previous occupant of the house. Now and then they will say to a group, "You may use the house, but we cannot be present, and it is just as well that we shouldn't be present for this occasion," and so on. But in general, they have been very, very popular host and hostess at innumerable events.

Riess: How did you help the Heynses and the Bowkers, who really didn't know California traditions?

Wilson: I can answer that for Bowker much better than for Heyns because Bowker had been accustomed when he was chancellor of the City University of New York to meet once a week with a scheduling committee in order to sort out all of the invitations he had for public affairs and social affairs, and he immediately instituted that system at Berkeley, the first chancellor to do so. So right from the beginning myself and the public affairs officer and several other key people sat with him and went over every invitation he had, and this was a terrific way to educate him about what this group is, what it does, how important it is, who this person is, and as Dick Hafner says, "What mileage are we going to get out of this dinner party?"

Bowker is exceedingly sharp and he has a marvelously retentive mind, so he quickly learned organizations, traditions, events, historical backgrounds of things, and now he knows the whole

Wilson: university family and alumni all over the state, all over the nation. Then we discovered that he, in his quiet way, liked to go and see things firsthand. So he has. He quickly became acquainted and educated himself with the traditions and people of the campus.

Roger Heyns must have done that, but through some other mechanism. He didn't have a scheduling committee, but, of course, when he called me in I'd tell him about this event and that event which public ceremonies had to be concerned with. We had to brief him about the chancellor's reception for new students and what he and Mrs. Heyns did and who the people were they were going to meet and so on. He probably got it more piecemeal from various people rather than from a group formed for that specific purpose.

Riess: Do you think there is any kind of an initial shyness on the part of people on this campus about having somebody from someplace else? What are the advantages and disadvantages?

Wilson: We have been very lucky. The two chancellors we took from outside-- Heyns and Bowker--have been very successful and very popular chancellors, completely different personalities, but they have gained the respect and the admiration of the campus.

When they were looking around for Bowker's successor, there was a good deal of fear about one of the candidates who was off the campus, and I don't think it was necessarily because he did not know Berkeley, but because of other elements in his background. I heard various faculty members discuss it and say, "We don't want a non-Berkeley person," and others say, "But we've done very well with Bowker and Heyns, so what have we to be afraid of?"

Then I heard the answer that "we are in such a critical situation as far as finances and the legislature and the political set-up are concerned, it's so complicated now, wouldn't it be fatal to spend the time training a new man however good he may be? If we've got a qualified candidate here who knows the complexity of the situation, isn't it better to take him if he's qualified?" Evidently, that is what happened.

But that doesn't mean Heyman is a Berkeley alum, a degree holder, the way Seaborg was. Seaborg's Ph.D. is from Berkeley and Clark Kerr's Ph.D. is from Berkeley. I don't know about Strong's degrees-- I think he came from outside.

Riess: There hasn't been a lot of cross-pollination with Harvard or Yale or places like that?

- Wilson: Not at the top administrative level, although Sproul after his long tenure in office was buddy-buddy with all of the university presidents throughout the world practically. He called them by their first names and could call them up and ask them questions or give them advice. It was a big brotherhood, a big paternal organization. I think this has been more or less true of the others. With Clark Kerr certainly it is true. He's probably the best-known man in higher education who is alive today in the U.S.A., all over. Hitch was not well known. I think Bowker is well known and I think now Roger Heyns is because he's gone from Michigan to Berkeley and then to the presidency of the American Council on Education. So he certainly is well known. Heyman will be well known before long, I am sure, and be on the first-name basis with very many people.
- Riess: We were talking about who has lived in University House. Hitch moved into the Blake Estate.
- Wilson: Yes, because it was decided that the president should not live on the campus, the actual physical campus, of any one of the several campuses of the university. The Blake Estate was given to the university and it is far away [Kensington], and since the headquarters of the university is in the city of Berkeley it is logical that the president should live close, but not on the campus.
- Riess: Is that where Saxon is living also?
- Wilson: Saxon is living in Blake House, and the University House on the Berkeley campus will remain the chancellor's residence. The vice-president of the university now has what they are calling--who is the female architect?
- Riess: Julia Morgan.
- Wilson: The Julia Morgan House, Claremont Boulevard, which is a beautiful old house. So the university is providing housing for the president, the vice-president, and the chancellor.

Adapting While Holding the Line

- Riess: Did you have to change your method of working with these changing people, or did you change their method of working with you?
[laughter] Which happened more?
- Wilson: I hope I have been adaptive, but I think right from the beginning you learn that a staff person or advisor to a head man has to be tactful, has to be sensitive to the likes and the dislikes and the moods of the person he is working with, has to try and anticipate his needs and desires.

Wilson: Once you acquire this general method of behaving, this general kind of listening and observing and trying to tune in, it's not hard then to change slightly because the basics are the same from all of these people. They want to succeed, they want to make the right decisions, they want to be liked and admired, they want to make a contribution, they know (if they're experienced) that they'll have to rely on various staff members because they can't make all of the decisions themselves. The most experienced always rely most upon their staff to do that.

So you simply make a small adjustment in your basic approach as an advisor or a staff person. If you feel that you cannot work successfully with somebody, then you resign.

I tried to resign once. It was when Ed Strong was chancellor. He had with him two or three people closer to him than I was who were making decisions I should be making and shutting me out, and I was very unhappy. Instead of just doing it on my own, I thought I had better talk to President Kerr since I had worked with him both as chancellor and as president--and was still working with him as president. I said, "I've got to get out of this."

He said, "Oh, you can't, Garff. No, you've got to stick it out. Things will get better. Things will change there. I'll see to that." (He didn't anticipate that he would get fired eventually!) [laughter] But he said, "No, no, you're too valuable to balance some of the other people that are there." He just couldn't hear of me resigning and I admired his judgment enough, trusted his judgment enough, so I said, "Okay, I'll stick it out, but I'm not enjoying it. I'm not happy about this circumventing the things that I should be doing and never telling me about it, or reversing a decision I had made without telling me about it or asking me about it."

Now at this late time in my career I've become sort of a curmudgeon with a reputation, "Don't tread on Wilson!" [laughter] "He's entrenched in his little bailiwick and you better not oppose him." But it's all right for certain people to feel that way.

Riess: There were things that you felt passionately about over the years, but could not do much about?

Wilson: There are things which I think should be done in a particular way for the good of the university. I've been able to keep those things going much the same way and eventually key campus people have come to recognize that maybe I'm right. At the same time, I've always tried to be flexible and to approach any traditional event with the idea, "How can we improve it? How can we be more creative and

Wilson: innovate? We don't have to follow the same procedures every year after year even though they have been tried and proved to be effective. Let's try something else for a change and see if it might work."

When anybody comes to me for advice on how to do a dedication I will say, "There are as many ways to do a dedication as there are dedications. What are your traditions? What is your space like?" "Don't follow a formula. Say to yourself, 'What are we trying to accomplish here?' How can you make it fun and novel and so on?"

One of our most successful little dedications was the dedication of the Class of 1914 fountain which is up there where College dead-ends at Bancroft. The Class of 1914--Bob Koshland, Don McLaughlin, and so on--there were these wonderful old alums. They said they wanted a different kind of dedication, not just a series of speeches.

Hafner and I got together and between us we hatched a delightful idea. It's a fountain--water, liquid. What water has been important to the Berkeley campus? Strawberry Creek, San Francisco Bay, the old engineer's fountain, and so on. We proposed then that these prominent alums talk about the meaning of Strawberry Creek and then pour a vial of water from Strawberry Creek into the fountain. Then the meaning of San Francisco Bay to the class and campus and pour a pitcher of San Francisco Bay water.

The third was that they had discovered-- and this was all made up--a sealed bottle of water from the old engineer's fountain, the Mining Circle fountain, that had been kept and that used to be a very important part of their student life. They unsealed this "old, old bottle" and poured it in. Then the last speaker had "the liquid that has been most important to our class," beer! [laughter] So he had a great stein and talked about the beer.

The beer was finally poured into the fountain, the magic words were spoken, and with the effect of these four different kinds of liquid, the fountain spurted up. It was such fun that two years afterward the class had another reunion and they reproduced that dedication exactly. The same people did the same things for a different audience and again they had fun doing it.

When you can think of something that is novel and appropriate, that's good, and that's what my policy has always been. But there are certain basic principles to be remembered. For example, I think the chancellor's reception for new students, when they are introduced to the head of the campus and the first lady and meet various high administrative officers, faculty members, and the leaders of the senior class, I think such an affair should have a certain grace

Wilson: and formality. That means that all of the people involved in running the reception should be in dinner jackets, tuxedos, and the ladies in long dresses. And we put on the invitation to the students when they attend the reception: "date dresses for women; jacket and tie for the men."

Riess: They would be turned away without?

Wilson: Yes, they'd be turned away or they'd be asked to go back and get a jacket or get a tie. But if they looked clean and, well--say, somebody had on a sports jacket and a muffler or something and looked very tidy and neat we wouldn't turn him away. I've had a battle to convince people that we should keep these dress regulations and not just say, "Faculty committee, senior class committee dress in any old way, and students informal, come in campus clothes." Somehow that misses something.

Can you imagine meeting the chancellor of Oxford University, or can you imagine Harvard University giving a function where you met the head of the institution and did not put on your best clothes? Well, I hold the line. The new chancellor has already agreed to hold the line for his first reception so he can observe it and see what it looks like.

Riess: I don't think that's at all old curmudgeoning. Who else is going to hold the line if you don't?

Wilson: With the reception for new students we've seen the pendulum swing. When first we did it, the students loved dressing up. Then during the years of revolt they assumed the stance that this was old-fashioned, it was irrelevant now in this dangerous world in which we live, and many of them tried to get out of it. During that period, too, the new students would come in some outlandish costumes and they had to be turned away.

But now the pendulum has swung back. The members of the senior class who are invited to assist love to dress up now. We rent tuxedos for the men. Most of them don't any longer own a tux. We have made a slight concession to faculty members. We say that a tuxedo is optional and some faculty members come in dark suits. But the general sense is there. When the new students are presented, and they come up the grand staircase and are greeted by the student body president in a tuxedo or, if she's a female, in a long dress, and are introduced to a faculty member or faculty wife in formal clothes, taken in to the chancellor and his wife in formal clothes, and then led to the ballroom and introduced to another senior student in formal dress--they get the idea! [chuckles]

Riess: That they're at a great university.

Wilson: Yes, and that there are certain standards which we observe here and that meeting the chancellor is not a casual occasion. It is a formal occasion and they should remember it. The new students in the past two years have gladdened the hearts of all of us because they have been so well groomed and well dressed. They really now seem to be taking a pride in dressing up for this occasion. We don't have any freaks any longer, but just well-turned-out young people, well groomed.

Riess: That is a relief, isn't it?

Wilson: Yes, it's such a delight to have the change come about. Well, it's five past three.

XI MEETING AND GREETING V.I.P.s

[Interview 12: June 2, 1980]##

General George Marshall, Charter Day 1948

Wilson: Nineteen forty-eight was a year in which I had a very good initiation in how you meet and greet V.I.P.s and how you entertain them, because on Charter Day of that year our guest speaker was George C. Marshall, the famous World War II general who was in 1948 the secretary of state. I think he had retired once, but President Truman had called him back to carry the heavy burden of being the secretary of state and he agreed.

I'm not positive of the mechanism at that time for inviting him, but my general impression is that Robert Gordon Sproul was a very well-known president of the university and had been, oh, everywhere, certainly including Washington where he was well known. He was always conscious of our need of a big-name speaker for Charter Day. I think, always informally, he would say to somebody like Marshall, "Oh, we'd love to have you come and speak at the university." Marshall would say, "I'd be honored to," and then Sproul would pin him down, "Well, are you free in March?" [laughter]

My memory of Marshall is confined mostly to a single little incident. I was new on the public ceremonies committee then. The academic procession was forming on the Campanile Esplanade. In those days, before the student trouble, the whole faculty plus the president's party or the platform party--the V.I.P.s--all marched in procession from the Campanile to the Greek Theater. When the disturbance started in the 1960s we couldn't risk attacks on the V.I.P.s. We had to form them backstage of the Greek Theater and have them parade within the confines of the Greek Theater. But in 1948 things were simpler and easier and I was helping form the academic procession.

Wilson: President Sproul beckoned me over and then very kindly introduced me, saying, "Secretary Marshall, may I present Dr. Wilson, who is a professor in our department of speech." Secretary Marshall shook hands graciously and said, "I'm delighted to meet you, Dr. Wilson. You know, I'm always a little embarrassed when I meet a professor of speech because actually I am really not a very good speaker." Whereupon President Sproul responded [in loud, enthusiastic voice], "Ho, ho, ho, you don't have to worry! Wilson isn't very good either." [laughter] I have always counted that as the most distinguished insult I have ever received, and I sometimes tell the story to alumni groups.

Riess: Was Marshall delivering a major policy speech?

Wilson: No, it was more of a ceremonial speech, as I remember it. It had good coverage by all of the media at the time because he was such a distinguished person, but I don't think the substance of it made headlines or was memorable.

Riess: As far as coverage goes, do you make a point of setting up press conferences so that if there are major political speakers, there would be a time for that?

Wilson: Usually, when we have a person of that caliber, the media ask for a press conference preceding the thing so they can ask questions. Sometimes they get it and sometimes they don't, but I wasn't close enough in 1948 to know whether Marshall appeared at a press conference and answered the questions of the media. But since then, and since television has become more and more important, whenever we have a big name now we have to reserve space for the television cameras. There are hordes of still cameras and the press always asks for preliminary copies of the speech so they can follow it and have their stories partially written.

One of the lures we use to get big speakers is to point out that they'll have an audience of ten thousand or more and there will be extensive coverage by all the news media, and this appeals to most people, especially an elective person, and they know how to handle it. I don't recall that phase of it in Marshall's visit, but I do recall that it was in the morning. (We have now changed the thing to the afternoon because we have a better chance of switching in case of rain.)

The Greek Theater was crowded because Marshall was a very famous name and it seemed, from my point of view, to go off beautifully.

Riess: Charter Day speakers have been for the most part prominent personages, government figures, rather than great literary and cultural lights.

Wilson: That's true. Every now and then, in desperation, the president or the chancellor says, "Can't we find somebody in the arts who has the name to appeal to people and who will do it, who is accustomed to do it?" Frost came back and spoke at a university meeting here. He gave a lecture down in the Berkeley Community Theater, but he was never the Charter Day speaker. Archibald MacLeish was Charter Day speaker a couple of times. He had been not only a literary man, but had served in the public domain as it were. He was Librarian of Congress once. He was assistant secretary of state once, I guess, and he was the man who drafted much of the wording of the United Nations charter. So he was a man of vast experience.

Riess: But there was a sense that that was missing?

Wilson: That's right, and the president didn't want to have political figures all of the time.

I remember one invitation to Aldous Huxley. I was an officer of Phi Beta Kappa, and Matthew Huxley, his son, was being initiated, and I thought, "Oh, how perfect if his father would come up and be the main speaker at Matthew's initiation." So I, as secretary of the chapter, wrote to him and asked him. He wrote a very nice letter back, which I still have in my copy of Point Counter Point since it was a personal letter, saying how pleased he was that Matthew had achieved this honor and that he would like to be able to say yes. But he said, "Although the spirit is willing, really the flesh is very, very weak and I am not good at this sort of public appearance, so I will have to beg off." I can't remember whether I met him then. No, he didn't come up then, but he was on the campus for some other thing and I met him and reminded him of that. He was a fragile wraith of a person at that time, tall and gaunt with bad eyesight and so on, but still impressive in his own way. But many literary people, people in the arts, shrink from this exposure.

President Harry Truman, Commencement 1948

Wilson: Well, back to 1948. In a few short months I was very much involved with public ceremonies. There is an untold story about the invitation Harry Truman received, and what I'm saying is secondhand, but I was around the president's office enough to believe that there is something to this--that it was he who made the overture. Truman was going to be on the West Coast, in the state of Washington, and he was looking for a place to appear, and somebody must have told

Wilson: him Berkeley had a huge and colorful pageant for a commencement, usually in the stadium. I believe the overture to speak at the commencement came from Washington [D.C.].

I am told that the regents, who were predominantly Republicans, weren't entirely happy about this. But there were those regents who said, "One never turns down a President of the United States if he wants to come and visit you." So the official invitation was issued (and it always carried with it an honorary degree) and it was accepted.

I learned several things from that visit. Maybe the first thing that comes to mind is the exhaustive security precautions that are taken for a president. Many days before the event we had the advance group of secret service men out here. I remember going down with them to the Southern Pacific Railway Station. (He was coming in by train from the north.) They looked at all the tracks. They looked at all the buildings which overlooked them and decided which track would be the safest to bring the President's car in, and discussed with the station master at what spot they had to maneuver the car to give it the most protection from any possible sniper in the building.

Then they drove up University Avenue examining all of the buildings and all of the upper stories and so on, plotted out the course just as carefully as they could. It's my understanding that in all vacant buildings at that time they had agents observing, and agents on the roofs observing.

President Truman was going to have lunch in Faculty Glade, and every bush concealed a secret service man. [laughter] I learned from that visit that people who are going to have free access to come and go are given a special little emblem to put in your lapel and every law enforcement officer recognizes it. Without any ado they see it on you and they don't say a word, [and] let you through. I happened to be wearing one of those and went into Faculty Glade to check something the morning of commencement. Two men stepped forward, saw it, and didn't say a word. Behind me were a couple of other faculty members and they started to go--"Excuse me, this is an area that has been sealed off." "But you let that man in!" [laughter] I suppose one of them said, "Well, he has had clearance," or something like that. Anyway, it was magical to have one of those badges.

Riess: Did they clear all the traffic on University Avenue and bring them up in a motorcade?

Wilson: Yes.

Riess: Did they do it discreetly?

Wilson: I didn't observe that, but when President Kennedy was here they did it discreetly. Kennedy's car was completely surrounded by motorcycle policemen with flashing red lights--dazzling--but no sirens. I assume that is what they did with Truman.

Riess: Doesn't that make for a tremendous air of tension?

Wilson: Oh, excitement. Oh, yes, sure, sure. Here comes the President of the United States and it is impressive indeed. In the stadium for security when Truman was here they had the whole audience infiltrated with plainclothesmen. Then they imported two hundred military policemen from Fort Ord who ringed the floor of the stadium with their guns at the ready facing the crowd, and any false move would have been very dangerous.

Riess: At some point did they clear these arrangements with you?

Wilson: Oh, well, it just had to be. I mean we have no choice in saying, "We won't allow this." "Then the President won't appear." In this country we have had a record of assassinating, and this was June, 1948, and Mr. Truman was supposed to be a lame duck president. He was going to be up for nomination and for election in November and everybody thought that he was a dead duck. But they took elaborate precautions, and I said to the head agent then (I believe his name was Brown), "Mr. Brown, you are taking extraordinary precautions, but is there any guarantee that there will not be some psychotic person in this stadium who will suddenly whip out a gun--whip out a pistol--and take a shot at the President?" Brown said, "We cannot guarantee that. There is every possibility of that happening. The only thing we would like to be able to guarantee is that he will get only one shot. He will be covered instantly!"

Riess: Oh, but there is risk to other people's lives!

Wilson: Well, because of the care they had taken in examining the route and empty buildings in 1948 I have not been able to this day to understand the Dallas assassination of John F. Kennedy. How they could possibly have had that tall building with the upper floors vacant and not surveyed carefully as they did here at Berkeley in 1948 is something I will just never understand, or how the assassin got several shots! So that's one thing I learned. They take extraordinary precautions to protect the President.

Riess: They had their own mechanism? They weren't making demands for your assistance here?

Wilson: No, but our enforcement agencies were all at the disposal of the secret service. They can command any number of Berkeley policemen, campus policemen, California state highway patrolmen from anyplace. And they did. They commanded two hundred M.P.s from Ford Ord.

Riess: How about checking on cameras? They have always seemed to me to have weapon-like potential. Is it routine to examine cameras?

Wilson: No, I haven't seen that done. At neither of these presidential visits have I seen them examine cameras in this vast outdoor setting. I think they feel that it's practically impossible to do. Maybe if you are in an enclosed auditorium with a number of people, they might do it, ask you to check in cameras as they do at museums in Europe. Of course, you can't take a camera into the Louvre, say, unless you get a permit. You have to check it.

The media--the press people--probably have their own type of surveillance. Probably that is provided in a different way, but I don't get along well with the media [chuckles] and so our public affairs officer, knowing this, keeps me out of it and I'm very happy to stay out.

Riess: What do they bring out in you?

Wilson: Well, they bring out in me complete disgust and belligerence because it seems to me they want to emphasize only what is sensational, distort the picture, and make one tiny episode a major event in, say, a commencement. In one of the last big stadium commencements we had, there was going to be a protest. A few students were going to walk out and hold their own commencement of protest, and they did. Well, we had more television cameras there than we've ever had before. I walked up to one television man. I said, "Where are you from?" "Sacramento." I said, "You've never covered a commencement before, have you?" He said, "No, I haven't." I said, "I suppose you are here because there is going to be this protest." "Oh, no, we're going to photograph the whole commencement." I said, "Ha, I'll watch and see."

Well, they photographed the beginning, the opening, and very early in the proceedings the rebel group rose and walked out. I think there were three faculty members sitting on the stage who joined them and maybe, oh, 150 or two hundred students. Now, there were remaining on the stage three hundred faculty members and there were remaining in the group on the floor of the stadium probably three thousand candidates. But every single camera followed the splinter group, that little fraction, out and went down and recorded their whole ceremony in Faculty Glade. They didn't stay with the main thing, as this one man had piously said they were going to do. Ha!

Wilson: For the Truman commencement they wanted to build a platform right in front of all of the graduates. The graduates sit on the floor of the stadium, the audience sits in the bowl, and there's a stage erected at one end. They wanted to put up their platform blocking out the view of all of the candidates, all of the graduating students. We had really a ring-tailed, drag-out fight over that. I, as the president's (Sproul's) representative at the time, said, "Absolutely not. The commencement is for these students and the president is our guest. You will have to conform." Professor Fred Harris, who was chairman of public ceremonies, was more diplomatic and arranged to have the platform over at the side and take it from an angle, and that is what we've done ever since. They can't block out the view of the candidates. But it is their assumption that any function at all is their property. They have to bring news of it to the public, so you have to conform to their desires, and it doesn't matter if it ruins your ceremony as long as they get what they want. That's why I am not a diplomatic person with the media. I have had too many run-ins with them.

Riess: Where did Harry Truman stay? Did he spend the night?

Wilson: He spent the night in San Francisco. He came to Berkeley and he relaxed at the president's house for a while. His valet was with him, a black man named Mr. Prettyman, Mrs. Sproul told me. They had luncheon in Faculty Glade and then went to the stadium.

Another thing, since we are on the media, that I learned most forcibly from President Truman's visit, is that the image which the media creates--the image of the man or the president--has no relation whatsoever with the actual person. All of the events or all of the publicity during that year had made Truman out to be a bumbling little man who was always putting his foot in his mouth, saying the wrong thing, being kind of stupid and petty. Well, when I met him and listened to him that was so far from the truth. He was the most gracious, most genteel kind of person, sharp of wit, very friendly of manner, and at that time he was in good health, a ruddy complexion, and was most impressive. There was nothing of the bumbler in him and he went out of his way to be gracious.

For example, when the president's party took the stage he was about to sit down and looked across and saw Monroe Deutsch, the vice-president and provost, in the front row. Now, Deutsch had recently broken his hip. He was on crutches. Deutsch had been the man who had introduced Senator Harry Truman at the Commonwealth Club some few years previous and Deutsch had come early and taken a seat in the front row with the faculty. Truman spotted him, recognized him instantly, and walked over to him to shake hands and chat with

Wilson: him. Deutsch struggled to get on his feet with his crutches. I heard the President say, "Oh, please, please, don't, Dr. Deutsch, sit down, sit down." He was thoughtful and gracious.

I was sitting right behind the president's chair (that is, President Truman's chair) with Margaret Truman. The whole family had come for this event. Mrs. Truman (Bess) was there, Margaret was there, and several other retainers. They had come in early and taken their seats on the stage and then the great procession came in. I sat with Margaret.

For that particular commencement we had the stage at the south end facing north. Then we blocked off the south end of the stadium seats with those great big blue and gold banners, huge, twenty-five feet tall, because we knew that 65,000 people were going to be there and to block out those end zone seats would be a nice stage set-up. But the rest of the bowl was full. We had about three thousand candidates on the floor of the stadium.

Margaret Truman, who was sitting at my right, said to me, "Is this a large crowd?" I said, "This is the biggest crowd we've ever had for a commencement." She said, "The papers won't report that tomorrow." I said, "How can they fail to report it? Look, if they take pictures they'll see sixty thousand people!" She said, "Mark my word, they'll find a way."

And to my utter amazement the Oakland Tribune had stationed a photographer behind the banners blocking out the end zone seats. He took an angle shot which included all of those empty seats back of the stage drop and just a few people at the beginning of the audience, and the lead in that story the next day was something like this (this is only a paraphrase): "Yesterday, before a sparsely filled stadium, President Harry Truman delivered the commencement address at the University of California commencement." It was a downright falsehood and I have never forgotten that distortion of the fact. Ever since then I've said of any public man, "Don't expect the media to give a fair indication of the kind of a man he is." (And not only was Harry Truman gracious, but I heard him exchange banter and witty remarks with Sproul. To keep up with Sproul you've got to be pretty sharp.)

But I think a reason that Truman sometimes got a bad press is that he had some weaknesses in his staff. They didn't always do the right thing by the boss. For example, in those days we always used a big "cue book" as we called it. It's more like a script of exactly what everybody says at a big ceremony because such a ceremony can't be rehearsed. So you give each participant the script

Wilson: of the whole thing with directions of when he gets up and when he sits down and who gets up next and so on. If people will follow the book, we have a smooth operation.

One of Truman's advance agents said, "Can we get advance copies of the cue book?" I said, "Of course." Three days before--we usually don't put it out until the very last minute because there are so many changes--we got it out three days before and two or three copies were flown up to Truman where he was in Washington. We thought, "That's fine."

In that commencement of '48, Truman had two or three assignments. His first assignment was to administer the oath of office to the cadets who were being commissioned as second lieutenants in the Army ROTC and the ensigns in the Navy ROTC. President Sproul announced, "This year the oath of office"--it was a colorful part of the ceremony in those days, but after a while uniforms became impossible to wear in public--"this year instead of having a representative of the president, the President of the United States himself will administer the oath of office." He turned to Truman and only then I noticed Truman didn't have a cue book in his hands, but he immediately looked up and he saw President Sproul's book and he followed it perfectly and administered the oath of office.

He came back and sat down and turned back to me and said, "Am I supposed to have one of those books?" I said, "President Truman, we had three of them flown up to you three days ago!" He said, "I never got it." "Here, use mine"--I was just following the course of action--"use mine." So he used it all the rest of the ceremony.

Here's an observation that I want to put in here, and that is that somebody on his staff had failed to deliver the cue book so he could look through it and see exactly what he was expected to do and so on. That is unpardonable, I think.

Anyway, he gave the book back to me and then I said to myself the next day, "How silly! Why didn't I have him autograph it?" So I wrote a little note to President Truman's secretary; Matt Connally was his name. I sent it back and said, "This is the book used by President Truman. Do you think he would be willing to autograph it and send it back to us?"

In due course I got the book back with a little note from Matt Connally; and here is a tiny human footnote to the history of Harry Truman: he had written in bluish ink inside the cover of the book, "This book was used by me at the commencement of 1948, Harry S. Truman." In blue ink "commencement" had been spelled without the

Wilson: middle e: c-o-m-m-e-n-c-m-e-n-t. In black ink an e had been added and when I looked at Matt Connally's note he had signed his name in black ink. [laughter] He had seen the book, noted the misspelling, and said, "I can't have this go out and [show] the President can't spell 'commencement,'" and he had added the e, but he added it in a different color of ink so it was apparent. [laughter]

I still have that book. It belongs in the archives really. I will give it to the archives, but I have it in my personal library at home because it's such a delightful little bit of human history. Of course, there are many, many people who are poor spellers and who have fine minds and are well educated. My mother used to say I was going to flunk out of college because I couldn't spell. I have my dictionary at my elbow all the time and have to look at it quite often.

Another regret: the senior ball was that evening, and I had been invited to go as a faculty patron. I went without a wife or a partner, but I suddenly thought, after Margaret Truman had departed, "Why didn't I think of asking Margaret Truman to come with me to the senior ball?" What a sensation that would have made! [laughter] It's only hindsight. I was able to correct the hindsight of the signature, autographing the cue book, but not the hindsight of dating Margaret Truman.

Riess: Margaret Truman's remark about the press was interesting. It must accurately reflect her experience with all of this. Did you get to talk to Bess?

Wilson: Yes, she was very gracious, but I can understand how some people might find her forbidding. She could get a very set expression on her face, with the lips firmly compressed, so you knew you better not trespass! [chuckles]

Riess: I wonder how Mrs. Sproul did with her?

Wilson: Oh, I'm sure they got along beautifully because Mrs. Sproul would be the one who would know exactly what to say and what to do, I'm sure.

Well, that was a most memorable year then. I don't know--should we jump to the only other presidential visit?

Riess: Yes, why not? The idea of all of that grisly armament around Truman makes me wonder how it was handled when President Kennedy was here.

President John F. Kennedy, Charter Day 1962

Wilson: There were no uniformed military police anyplace. They omitted that completely.

Riess: How did Kennedy come to speak?

Wilson: Clark Kerr invited him. He had invited Clark Kerr to be in his cabinet. Kerr felt that this was so early in his presidency (in 1962), he had been president four years, that it would be unfair to the university to leave his job. He had so much to do, he felt, here. I guess he was in the middle of the Master Plan negotiations and things like that. But they evidently were friends.

Riess: What would his role have been in the cabinet?

Wilson: I think secretary of the department of commerce, but that was never announced publicly. But I understand an offer was made another time to Kerr.

Anyway, Kerr had (like Sproul) a real eye out for big-name speakers, and it was very sensational when it was announced that this popular young President of the United States would speak on March 23, 1962. That was actually Charter Day. Hardly anybody remembers it was also the inauguration of Ed Strong as chancellor [laughter] because he was so overshadowed by the presence not only of Kennedy, but of our own alumnus, Robert McNamara, who got an honorary degree, and another alumnus, the president of one of the universities, who had just retired and got another honorary degree.

It was altogether the most brilliant public ceremony that I think has ever been held at this university. I don't think it will ever be surpassed. I hope it will be equalled sometime. It was the largest live audience which President Kennedy had ever addressed and it was the largest audience ever to assemble in the California Memorial Stadium; the bowl was absolutely filled and we had ten thousand chairs on the floor of the stadium. (Now, the bowl has been full many times for football games, but you can't put ten thousand spectators on the floor of the stadium. That's reserved for twenty-two players.)

It was a perfect day, too, one of those crisp, clear, brilliantly sunny days. We had been in despair because the long-range prediction was for rain that day and there was absolutely no alternative. We had distributed about 110,000 tickets, knowing that there are always a lot of no-shows when you have free tickets. But knowing that ninety to a hundred thousand would show up, there's no

Wilson: alternative site, and we just decided if the rain came we would have to have the ceremony in Harmon Gymnasium and accommodate as many people as could get in--"first come, first served"--and that's all. But it was a nightmarish thing to contemplate.

Well, three or four days before, the weather prediction started to change: "It may be cloudy with showers." Then about the third day before they said: "Cloudy and the chance of rain is very slight." Then the day before: "It looks as though it's going to be clear." The day of the thing was a sparkling, beautiful day! I'd made a compact with the devil that if he'd give us a clear day in 1962, I'd take rain the next five years. (I think we had rain three years out of the next five, which is very unusual, and nobody ever let me forget that! But I would say, "Of course, it was worth it!")

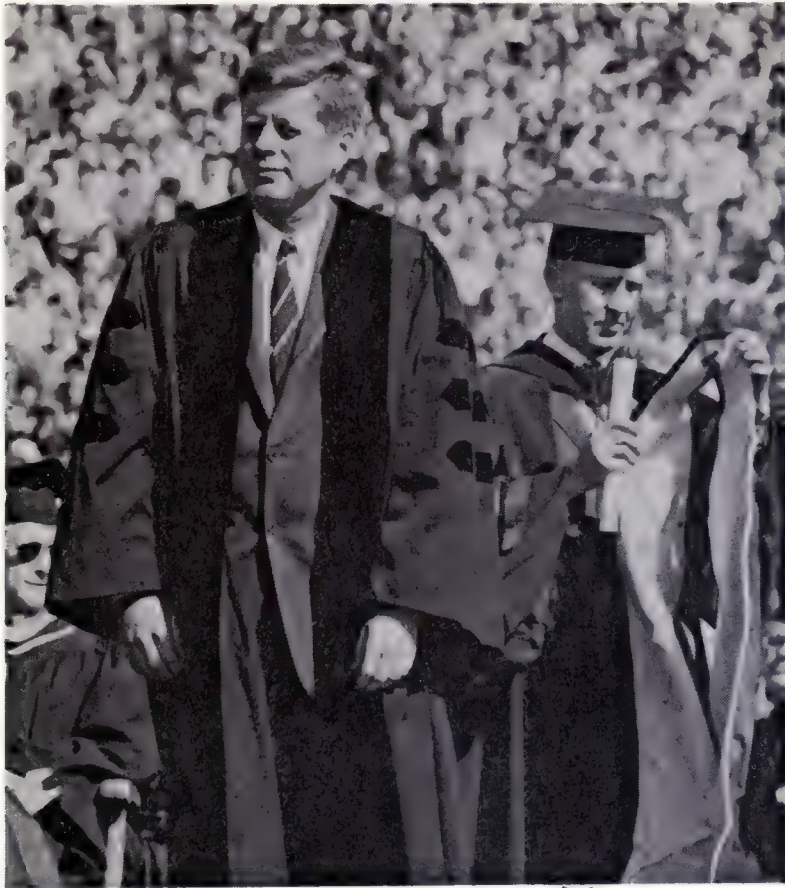
The preparations for the day were exhausting--exhaustive. The luncheon was inside in University House. President Kerr called me and asked me if I couldn't come to the luncheon, and I said in surprise, "You know I'll have to be in the stadium straightening chairs," and he said, "Oh, yes, I knew you'd be there, but I thought it would be nice to invite you anyway!" [laughter] We had a lot of bargaining with General Clifton, President Kennedy's military aide, who was here making arrangements long before. This wasn't security. President Kerr had asked a vice-president of the university to be the general chairman of this thing. He evidently thought somebody of higher rank needed to deal with the people from the White House.

Riess: Do you mean instead of you?

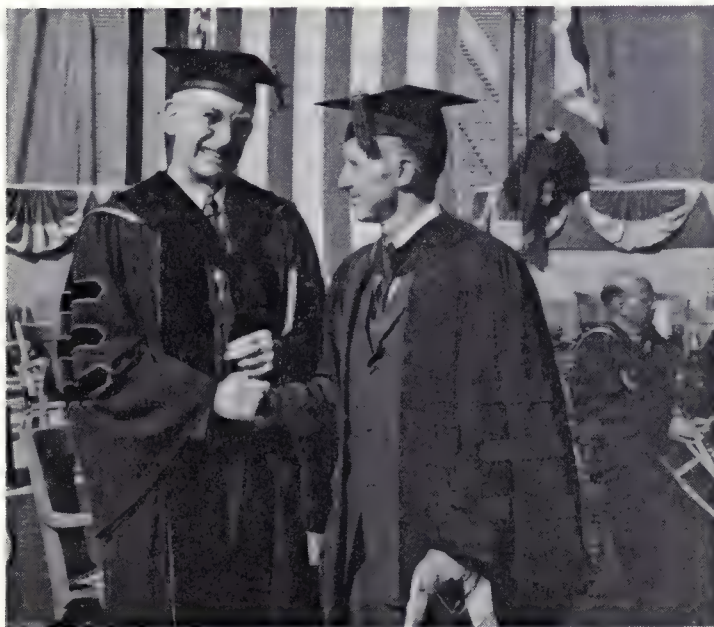
Wilson: Yes.

Riess: Who was the vice-president then?

Wilson: It was the same vice-president who ruined the Savio business. Earl Bolton was his name. So he was the general chairman of the arrangements and would call all kinds of meetings. The trouble with a situation like that is that the figurehead chairman then has to be taught the whole procedure and he makes suggestions to do things this way and that way--methods which we've tried for years and found to be a failure and so adopted another system. But you have to be patient when you have a super-chairman over you. You have to spend time educating him to the way things have to be done. [sighs] Well, when it became known that President Kennedy was going to be here, then he (Kennedy) started getting a flood of invitations to do other things, and his staff started to say, "Maybe we can get him to drop in here and drop in there." Finally, at one of these meetings--



John F. Kennedy and Garff Wilson, March 23, 1962, Charter Day, California Memorial Stadium. Wilson is preparing the LL.D. hood which Kennedy will wear.



The 95th Commencement, California Memorial Stadium June 13, 1958. Sproul's last commencement as President. From left: President Robert Gordon Sproul, Garff Wilson. Seated is President-Designate Clark Kerr.

Riess: Do you mean Kennedy's staff?

Wilson: Yes, Kennedy's staff started to squeeze down his appearance at Berkeley. At one of these meetings for arrangements, General Clifton said, "We'd like him also to do this and this. How would it be to start the ceremony without President Kennedy and then we'll guarantee to get him in before his speech and then have him leave so he can make another engagement?" At this point I blew my stack, and I discovered at times it's effective to do this, not to be gentle and diplomatic.

I said, "General Clifton, let's call off the President's appearance on the campus completely. If he has all these other things to do, let him do those, and we'll cancel his appearance here. I thought this was the main reason for his visit, but if now you've crowded it so that he is ignominiously sneaked in while the ceremony is in progress, has a few minutes to speak, and then is sneaked out, that is an insult to the university."

Meanwhile, Vice-President Bolton said, "Now, we mustn't lose our tempers. Now, we can arrange this and so on," being the peacemaker. Well, General Clifton said to me, "How long do you want him in the stadium?" I said, "We'll get him off in an hour-and-a-half. You give me an hour-and-a-half for the whole thing." He said, "All right, done, if you'll guarantee to get him out in an hour-and-a-half. We'll have him there on time and we'll get him out on time." I said, "I'll get him out on time."

That's what we did. I think that that ceremony started at 1:30, and as we were escorting President Kennedy back to his car I was walking with General Clifton and I said, "Look at your watch, General Clifton." It was ten minutes before three. I said, "We've done our job in an hour and twenty minutes, we've kept our part of the bargain." He said, "Yes, thank you very much."

Riess: Well, it was good you got mad then!

Wilson: Yes, I got mad.

Riess: That's an insight into what must happen to all of these people as candidates, and as officeholders.

Wilson: That's right, they have to make so many appearances and the staff is so anxious to have them create the best public impression. But you keep the main event in sight and you do not try to work out a scheme such as General Clifton had suggested.

Well, what else do I remember about that?

- Riess: You mentioned the luncheon. Ella Hagar said she was invited to the luncheon and she was rueful that she hadn't said something significant enough to Kennedy.* She also said that President Kennedy didn't eat lunch. He went upstairs and had a little sandwich and looked at his speech. That interests me. How much have you seen of that instinct for self-preservation which seems to me very important?
- Wilson: Yes, not very often, because the royalty we've had did not do that. They met everybody. I remember the King of Morocco sitting at the lunch table. I remember the King and Queen of Greece and the King and Queen of Denmark sitting at the lunch table and so on. Just last March the Crown Prince of Belgium and his Princess sat at the luncheon and the Prince spoke afterwards. Of course, they weren't looking forward to a big public appearance afterwards, although the King of Greece did make a speech and so did the King of Denmark.
- Riess: How is it decided who is coming to lunch with a Kennedy?
- Wilson: In those days, Mrs. Sproul and President Sproul would decide. I was never consulted then.
- Riess: With Kennedy it would have been Mrs. Kerr.
- Wilson: Oh, yes. I was thinking of Truman.

One thing that I think was always standard procedure was to ask the guest of honor (in this case, President Kennedy) if he had close friends or relatives in the area whom he'd like invited. Then I'm sure both Clark Kerr and Kay Kerr had a keen sense of the whole political scene and the kinds of persons, being friends of the Kennedys, whom they would like to meet and talk to, although Mrs. Kennedy didn't come. She was off in India at that time. But I think that's perfectly understandable, not to drain your energy by having to make small talk at a luncheon and having to appear gracious and so on when you can relax and go over your speech.

*See interview with Ella Barrows Hagar, Continuing Memoirs: Family, Community, University, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1974.

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Wilson: I know from my minor engagements as a public speaker, if you sit at the head table and are pleasant and reply to conversation and you put out energy all of the time, when the time comes for you to speak, you're exhausted! But you rally, and with me an audience is always a great stimulant. You call on reserves of energy and you make do. But you are aware of the fact of how much energy you have expended and I am sure a person like Kennedy was well aware of it, although he was a strong young man.

But the memorable parts--see, I hadn't laid eyes on him since he arrived. I was in the north tunnel of the stadium waiting for the official party to arrive. (Another argument I had had with General Clifton [chuckles] was the route Kennedy was going to take as he marched in the procession to his place on the stage. Now, that photograph on the wall above you shows the set-up. We had the stage in the middle of the east side of the floor of the stadium and so the whole bowl was full all around and then the ten thousand chairs on the floor of the stadium facing it. The direct route would be from the north tunnel along that shortest axis right to the stage.)

I said, "The audience won't get a chance to see him and cheer him. Can't we march him around the curve of the bowl--the far way--and then down the central aisle on to the stage?" Well, we argued over that and General Clifton was afraid of security. He said, "That's an awful long route." I said, "We'll guarantee to have an honor guard, both of our cadets and our seniors in cap and gown, elbow to elbow along there"--which we did have, elbow to elbow. He walked through a solid wall of students, but everybody above could look down and see him.

The night before, I was tossing and thinking. We had issued caps and gowns. We had enough uniformed cadets to form half the guard, but we had to call on senior students, men at that time, and then caps and gowns were issued them, and we had all of their names. But I started to think of a weak link in my plan. If somebody who wants to take a pot shot at Kennedy hears about this, all he has to do is to find a cap and gown and then walk in and be a part of that guard of honor and then whip out a gun from his gown. So first thing in the morning, I called a couple of the best-known seniors and said, "We've slipped up on this. I want you to man the honor guard entrance with a complete list of the seniors in the guard. You know them all and can identify them all. When they come in they've got to show their pass, they've got to show their cap and gown, and you've got to check the list to be sure that the person who calls himself Dave George is Dave George. (By the way, Dave George was one of these checkers.) That's the way we filled up that gap in the plan.

Wilson: So the great moment was about to arrive. I was in the north tunnel waiting, and I've never seen a more impressive sight: turning into the north parking lot, right in front of Bowles Hall, came this cavalcade, a whole phalanx of motorcycles in front on each side surrounding this big black bulletproof Cadillac, all of them silent but flashing these red lights. They rolled silently into the stadium and the door opened and General Clifton got out and then President Kennedy got out. They had gotten ahead of the regents and President Kerr. So I had the immense good luck of having a few minutes alone with President Kennedy.

He shook hands and I was able to introduce him to a couple of students there and then I said, "We have your cap and gown. May I help you on with it?" "Oh, yes, thank you," said President Kennedy. So I helped him on with the robe. Now, on a doctor's robe there are two black tapes on the inner lining to keep the robe from slipping down over your shoulders. You feel for the tapes and tie them around the person so it won't slip. Here I found myself putting my hands--feeling up the shoulders of the President of the United States--and with a half smile on his face he said, "Hey, what's happening here?" Then it dawned on me and I said, "Oh, excuse me, Mr. President. I apologize, but you know those strings that have to be tied to keep the robe from slipping off your shoulders, I'm trying to find them." He said, "Let me help you." So he found them and he tied them together.

Riess: I thought you were going to discover he was wearing a bulletproof vest!

Wilson: No, no, it was just that I found myself pawing the person of the president! [laughter] Then we gave him a mortarboard to put on, but he didn't keep it on very long because in a moment or two the rest of the official party arrived--President Kerr and the regents and other V.I.P.s We arranged them in the right places in the procession.

Everything was set, and I had a P.A. system in the north tunnel for making the announcements. I said, "Ladies and gentlemen, the president's party." The fanfare, and then "Hail to the Chief," and into the sunlight stepped John F. Kennedy. At that instant he took off his mortarboard and all of that beautiful hair of his was in the sunlight, and 100,000 people rose as one individual. The pouring out of enthusiasm and affection and admiration was positively electric! It was as though a neon tube had been turned on. I've never seen rapport such as that [at] any other ceremony, anytime, anyplace. It was just beautiful. He took the long route

Wilson: between the guard of honor, all of them grinning and applauding. Then he walked up the main aisle. The faculty got on their chairs in order to see more! Then he finally sat down in the seat of honor on the stage.

I had, after making the announcement and after starting the procession, taken that short route to the stage and I was there to seat him. He did a double-take. I could read his mind. He looked at me and said, "Is that the same guy?" He looked to the north tunnel of the stadium and then back at me! "He gets around!"

Riess: At that point, what happened to poor Mr. Bolton?

Wilson: He was smoking a cigar backstage someplace. He had been at the luncheon.

Riess: Did Kennedy ever say anything about what a sensational thing it had been for him?

Wilson: Oh, yes, he wrote a fine note to President Kerr.

Here I am [looking at photos] looking as though "is there a spot on this gown?"--that funny expression on my face. [shows photograph]

Riess: It is a wonderful picture.

Wilson: Here's the best picture. I was hovering at his elbow. President Kennedy had quickly discovered that I had all the answers and so we'd chat back and forth. Here's another picture. I'm saving these pictures for my book if I ever write it.

Riess: The man is just exciting to look at.

Wilson: He was.

Riess: Who is this in the great drape?

Wilson: That's Regent Pauley. He has been and still is, I guess--he's still alive, but he's very feeble--a powerful voice in the Democratic party. He also may have been chairman of the board then. But he actually was the one who put the hood over the head of the president.

Riess: Was that usual?

Wilson: We had arranged that a person of eminence present the candidate for the honorary degree, but such a person always gets the hood wrong. I have to unfold it, check it out, and put it exactly in their hands.

Wilson: So I say, "You just hook it over their head." (You have to be sure that the person removes his mortarboard, otherwise it gets knocked off.) Well, I didn't mind that. That's what I was doing. But it was delightful to lean over his shoulder, and he'd say, "Now, who is this? What was that? What does that signify?" I could chat with him.

His speech had two or three--well, many--highlights. One of them was his saying, "This has been a memorable week," and he listed earth-shaking events which had happened, ending by saying, "Finally, it was the first time my wife had ever ridden on an elephant." And the audience roared--all of these really important things and ending with this anti-climax: "My wife rode on an elephant."

But the thing that delighted the Berkeley partisan audience was his listing of all the Berkeley degree holders who were in the cabinet or had high posts in Washington and then concluding by saying, "When I survey the men who surround me in Washington, I am forced to a very uncomfortable conclusion, namely that the New Frontier may owe more to Berkeley than it does to Harvard." [laughter] The audience loved that!

Riess: Do you think he wrote his own speech?

Wilson: I saw him making changes on it then. Oh, no, a man like that wouldn't write his own speech. He would have a whole set of speech writers to gather the information. For example, he talked about the first graduating class of the university, called the "twelve apostles," and then he listed the one who became a governor, two or three who were this or that--an amazing record of the first twelve graduates of the university--and he averred that the university has continued to turn out leaders ever since. So he had researchers. I'm sure they make two or three drafts which he sends back with suggestions and they finally type the thing, because we have the manuscript in the archives.

President Kerr said to me, "See if you can get the manuscript he uses here." Kennedy had it in an old Navy ring book and it was typed in the largest type you could put on a typewriter then. When it [the speech] was finished and something else was going on and we could whisper together, I said, "Would you be generous enough to leave your manuscript for the archives, and autograph it?" He said, "Oh, yes, why not?" So he started to take it out of the ring book and then he said, "Oh, you might as well keep the ring book too. I've used it for so many years, it's worn out." It's an old Navy ring book and I suspect that is the book he used when he was an

Wilson: officer in the Navy during the Second World War, and he had used it ever since. He gave it to us with the speech. The speech had his autograph and his corrections and changes in his handwriting all the way through it. It's in the archives and a very valuable document, I think.

Riess: That was very clever of you to do it right then and there. That was one of the times when you didn't have to kick yourself.

As a speech professor, what did you think of Kennedy's speech?

Wilson: Oh, it had so much of his own vibrant personality in it, and his youthful drive and his delightful New England accent in it. He had a habit of having a downward inflection at the end of some phrases where you shouldn't have a downward inflection, and he had one habit which Professor Alexander Magnus Drummond had broken me of. When Kennedy wanted to emphasize something, he'd stab the air with the index finger of his right hand. That's what Drummond called my "knitting needle gesture" and I became very conscious of that, and Kennedy was doing it all the time! But he did know how to deliver a line.

Riess: Do you think he had a coach, like his brother?

Wilson: He undoubtedly had people who criticized, and in Kennedy's time he could have a videotape and he could watch himself. We have a film of that occasion, a full sound film, and for Senator Ted Kennedy's visit too. Well, everybody who was there remembers the occasion. And the dreadful news of the assassination the following year I think had a special shattering effect in Berkeley because he had been here and literally 100,000 people had had a personal feeling about him.

What if the murder had happened on the Berkeley campus! You can see why we are a little paranoid about V.I.P. visitors. Our own police are too and we take enormous precautions. We don't have to when the secret service is involved because they do everything, but even with the secretary of the interior on this last Friday, we took lots of precautions to be sure nobody lunged at him and nobody pestered him.

Riess: I wasn't aware of that.

Wilson: The security people were all over, standing around. There were no uniforms, but they were all there. Of course, walkie-talkies now are a tremendous asset because we who are setting up, making the arrangements at Faculty Glade (I'm speaking of last Friday [May 30, 1980]), knew exactly when Secretary [Cecil] Andrus landed at the

- Wilson: heliport in Emeryville, when he started up University Avenue, and when he reached the West Gate and so on. We knew exactly when to send out the reception committee to be there as the car drew up. Our own police will have people posted out in the periphery seeing if any demonstration is forming or if there are any suspicious people.
- Riess: There were a few suspicious people, I thought.
- Wilson: That one--I had my eye on him--that boy who was passing out those sheets.
- Riess: Some person was creeping around the edge of the audience.
- Wilson: That's right, but he was well surveyed. Reminds me of one Charter Day when Earl Warren was on the stage. He was Chief Justice of the United States at the time and under very heavy security. There were plenty of demented persons who thought he should be impeached because of his liberal views. Well, a couple of college boys with tickets got in the upper aisle of the Greek Theater wearing trench coats and hats pulled down over their heads and hands in their pockets as just a joke. They were hustled out of there so fast by the plainclothespeople, who were not dressed in that fashion, and thoroughly searched and thoroughly scared! [laughter]

So there is a very quiet network of people observing and watching which is necessary to protect these people, but it's also scary when you think, "What if we were a fascist state and what if this network were directed against ordinary citizens?" But it's a real dilemma. You've got to protect ordinary citizens against the hoodlums and you've got to protect V.I.P.s against those who want to get in the newspaper by assassinating a president or a cabinet minister or something. On the one hand, you've got to have them; and on the other hand, they've got to be well controlled.

Souvenirs

- Riess: What do you do with the robes worn by dignitaries? Do you save them?
- Wilson: That reminds me of 1948 when President Truman was here. The lectern we have for the stadium is quite tall and one of his advance agents said, "It's too tall for Truman." (He was about 5'10".) We said, "We'll put a little platform behind it so everybody will step up and be taller above the lectern."

Wilson: After President Truman walked out, grounds and buildings had to apprehend people who were stealing the platform, who were stealing the chair he had sat in, and somebody got away with the water glass out of which he had had a drink of water. So when Kennedy was here, having had that experience we were prepared. Nobody got onto the stage after the thing was over and we had our own custodial staff and our own police very carefully guarding anything he touched. That's an interesting question. I don't know what happened to the gown that he was wearing; it was one that belonged to us because I helped him on with it.

Riess: These things have commercial value, I guess.

Wilson: We have started a system of gently and gracefully asking for donations of caps and gowns. When a faculty member passes to his reward, his widow very often gives us his cap and gown and his hood. Then we sew a label to the cap and gown saying whose regalia are these and what hood it was, what it represents, who owned it. Then we lend them to anybody that needs that. And for an important person, we will put in it that it was worn by so-and-so on such-and-such an occasion.

Riess: It's like a baby's mug!

Wilson: Yes, you keep the history of these gowns. But we weren't doing it in 1962, unfortunately. I must remember to call Marge Woolman, who was assistant secretary or secretary of the regents then, and find out if she supplied us with that gown, or did we supply it from our own extra ones?

Riess: You may find some gum wrappers in the pocket! [laughter]

Wilson: But that's an interesting thing. Whatever a person who is as celebrated as a President of the United States, whatever he touches or uses becomes valuable.

I go back now to Robert Frost. At his birthday dinner in 1947 we used as place cards a proof copy of the first page of a poem that was being published for the first time in a little volume called The Intervals of Robert Frost. It was a bibliography of his writing which had been compiled by Lewis Mertins, a good friend of his, and was being published by the University of California Press. This was a kind of a bribe to Mertins because Mertins had been collecting Frost manuscripts and things all of his life. He agreed to give them to the University of California. We now have the Mertins collection.

Wilson: Frost was here when the collection was officially turned over. So we had the press run off a two-fold that had this poem in it plus some other material. They were used as souvenirs at the birthday dinner. A few years later, up comes a good friend of Frost whose name I can't remember now who was also a collector. He asked me, "Was there a poster? Something announcing this visit?" I said, "I think there is." He said, "Have you got an invitation or a copy of the invitation to the birthday dinner?" "Yes, we've got an invitation." He collected every scrap of material that had Frost's name on it, and then he said, "Was there anything else?"

I said, "We did publish that page out of the book before the book was published and used it as a souvenir program." "Got any of those?" I said, "Yes, I think I've got two or three hundred extra of those in my office." He said, "Can you give me a few of them?" "Why, yes." "Why, this is the first edition of that poem. The book isn't the first edition. Here it's published in this folder and that's a first edition!" [laughter] I think I sent a lot of copies of that to our archives.

Riess: Well, I'm inclined to ask you for one too!

Wilson: I still have some of them.

Riess: Those years, 1948 and then 1962, were real high points. Now we should go on to talk about some other people who addressed the university.

Wilson: Well, I've made a speech several times--the Berkeley City Club president was a friend of mine and asked me a couple of years ago if I would speak. I said, "Give me enough notice and tell me what you want me to speak about." He said, "You suggest topics that you would like to speak about." I suggested four, three of them topics of substance and one of them I just dashed off--"Monarchs, presidents, and prime ministers I have known." Well, by gum, they chose that!

I put together material on Truman and Kennedy and then stories about a couple of kings and about Robert Frost too. They seemed to enjoy it very much. At least they've spread the word because I've had at least a half a dozen invitations to give that same speech to other groups since then. I am a little embarrassed because many times a few of the same people are present at the second or third or fourth time. I now begin the speech by saying, "If any of you have heard it before, you will not insult me but you will rather take some pressure off of me if you'll rise and go to the bar and stay there until I'm finished!" [laughter]

THE INTERVALS OF ROBERT FROST

A Critical Bibliography by
LOUIS AND ESTHER MERTINS

With an Introduction by
FULMER MOOD



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS
Berkeley and Los Angeles
1947

Neither Out Far nor In Deep.
The people along the sand
All turn and look one way;
They turn their back on the land;
They look at the sea all day.

Some say the land is more,
But whatever the truth may be,
The water comes ashore
And the people look at the sea

They cannot look out far;
They cannot look in deep;
But when was that a bar
To any watch they keep?

Robert Frost

THE INTERVALS OF ROBERT FROST

is a biographical bibliography. It divides the years of the man and the works of the poet, both geographically and chronologically, into the San Francisco, the Lawrence, the Derry, Dymock, Amherst, Cambridge, and Hanover Intervals. It is leisurely, warm, human—never very far away from friendship.

In a way the book is like a conversation in which Louis Mertins has asked the questions, and Robert Frost has answered them. The questions are those any more-than-casual reader of Frost might ask. Where and when was this poem conceived and written? Where are this *Pasture*, this *West-running Brook*, this *Wall*, these *Birches*, this *Road Not Taken*?

The answers, wherever answers can be made or suggested, come partly from Mertins' intimate knowledge of Frost and from recollections of days spent with him, but chiefly from the inscriptions which Frost has written in Mertins' own copies of the poet's works—in the items of the collection which it is the purpose of this unique bibliography to describe.

Is there any Pacific sea fog, any California gold dust, blowing about in the poems of a Western-born New-Englander? In a copy of the *Yale Review* in which "Neither Out Far nor In Deep" was first published, Frost wrote: "This is one of my few Californian poems. But it is made of mixed memories. Take care of the MS I gave you of it, Louis. R. F." (How well Louis Mertins took care of that MS, one can see on the opposite page.)

Mertins' copy of the *Independent*, November 8, 1894, bears beside "My Butterfly: An Elegy," this inscription: "To Louis Mertins. Kay Morrison found it for you. These were the lines that set me on my way. That's why I kept the poem in my first book. R. F."

THE INTERVALS OF ROBERT FROST: A Critical Bibliography. By Louis and Esther Mertins. With an Introduction by Fulmer Mood. This volume describes, in full bibliographical detail, a collection, owned by Louis Mertins, of manuscripts and first editions of the works of Robert Frost, of periodicals in which his poems have appeared, and of some reviews, articles, and annotated photographs. The inscriptions by Robert Frost which appear on many of these items have high value for biographical and bibliographical purposes. The collection will eventually be a part of the library of the University of California.

Fifteen hundred copies of this book, set in Estienne type, have been printed by the University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1947.

Riess: That is very clever! I'll bet not a one does. Do you have that speech in printed form?

Wilson: No, but the Berkeley Commons Club has their programs tape-recorded for the Berkeley radio station. They sent me a copy of the tape so I can turn it on and listen to myself. The only notes I have-- I use sheets of paper like these scratch pads and put down little notes and put down a list of the people I want to talk about and then glance at it and automatically the reminiscences come out, although I had forgotten about the Truman commencement where they tried to walk off with the platform and the chair and did get away with the glass he drank out of. New things emerge!

Charter Day at UCLA##

[Interview 13: June 9, 1980]

Riess: Reading through some UCLA history I saw that Dwight D. Eisenhower, Lyndon Johnson, Hubert Humphrey, and Prince Philip came in consecutive years and I got a competitive feeling, why didn't Berkeley get this group? I know what you said last time about how the Charter Day speakers were chosen. How did Chancellor Raymond B. Allen get these heads of state--

Wilson: Well, no, it wasn't Raymond B. Allen who got them. It was Clark Kerr. UCLA had become restive, believing that Berkeley got all of the important people, all of the V.I.P.s, and UCLA got only second-raters. So Clark Kerr said to himself, "I'll show them. I'll give them as many as they can handle." So he started to deluge them with these super stars until the work involved and the money it involved were so much that they finally shouted "uncle" and had to stop! But it was because of their complaints and because of Kerr's own personal ability and personal knowledge of these important people that they got such a stream of celebrities.

Riess: Now have they stopped having Charter Day completely?

Wilson: Yes, they've joined with Berkeley in the combined ceremony. There was one exception in 1975.

The year before, 1974, Barbara Tuchman had been a Charter Day speaker at Berkeley where all of the campuses participated. Now, distinguished historian and writer that she is, Dick Hafner and I knew that she wouldn't fill the Greek Theater. We long ago determined that rather than have a sparsely filled Greek Theater, it's

Wilson: better to have an overflowing auditorium. We sat down and figured out how many people Barbara Tuchman would attract and our best estimate was between 2,500 and three thousand, and that doesn't look good in the Greek Theater. So we determined that it should be in Zellerbach Auditorium with an overflow in the Playhouse.

Mr. Hitch, who was then president, was furious at this. He had wanted Tuchman and he wanted her to shine in the Greek Theater. But you don't shine in the Greek Theater when it's only sparsely filled, so we held out for Zellerbach. At that time, the commitment was that the president participates in the choice of the speaker, but Berkeley then makes all of the subsequent decisions. Dick Hafner and I always shake our heads with satisfaction because the estimate of the attendance was almost precisely what we had said. Zellerbach Auditorium holds two thousand if it's full. The Playhouse holds five hundred and we had closed circuit television in there. That holds five hundred, as I say, and that was full and there were about two hundred out in the plaza. So we figured the audience was 2,700 and we had said between 2,500 and three thousand. But it looked great and it gave Barbara Tuchman the feeling that she was a smash hit with overflow all over.

Riess: And you had all the rest of the pomp and circumstance?

Wilson: Yes, everything. Well, I never discussed this with Mr. Hitch, but the following year he proposed to the regents that the All-University Charter Day be held in UCLA for a change. This was fine with us at Berkeley. Chancellor Bowker saw this on the agenda coming up and he asked me, "Do we want our own Charter Day in addition?" I said, "We certainly do." So when it was proposed to the regents that it be moved to UCLA for 1975, Chancellor Bowker and George Link, who was on the Board of Regents then as president of the Alumni Association, said, "Let's put a proviso that any campus which wants to hold its own separate exercises may do so at its own expense." The regents said, "Why, that's perfectly fair."

Okay, so UCLA was designated to do the All-University Charter Day and Berkeley pledged to cooperate fully with them. But we also wanted to have our own. We sent a delegation back to Washington and presented the invitation to Senator Ted Kennedy, who was then a very popular speaker, and he accepted. Meanwhile, UCLA started casting about for a big-name speaker. They didn't do their homework. They decided that Alistair Cooke would draw a crowd and he would. But they got the wrong address. They thought he was in the U.S.A. and it turns out he was in England and before he ever got the letter it became far too late to get any other big person. So they said, "Since this is President Hitch's last year as president, let's invite him to give the charter address."

Riess: Oh, dear!

Wilson: So President Hitch became the Charter Day speaker down there. Berkeley sent the biggest delegation, even bigger than the southern California campuses. We wanted to support it. It was held in the Royce Auditorium and it attracted maybe seven hundred people. Even the students didn't come. A week later, Berkeley had its own Charter Day in the Greek Theater with Senator Kennedy and it was a huge, overflow crowd with thousands hanging from the trees and the rafters. [laughter]

Riess: What did Hitch think he would accomplish by taking it down there? Was this a way of slapping your hands for being--

Wilson: We assumed that was a way of expressing his displeasure. As a matter of fact, he doesn't know that Berkeley would be delighted if UCLA would take turns doing the All-University Charter Day. We would still have ours.

Riess: What is that distinction? I guess I wasn't aware that there is the All-University Charter Day.

Wilson: At the beginning the ceremony was going to alternate between UCLA and Berkeley. But UCLA doesn't like it. They don't have the traditions. They can't command an audience down there and we can. So they said, "You do it." To make it more attractive, the president of the university provides half the budget and that enables us to do more things. But you'll see on the posters there [in Wilson's office] that most of them say, "The nine campuses of the University of California will celebrate the 109th or 112th charter anniversary at exercises in the Hearst Greek Theater, Berkeley," on such-and-such a date. Well, on the 107th it merely says, "The University of California, 107th Charter Day," and so on.

So we make that distinction and Berkeley has the tradition, we have the place, we have the staff, and we have the desire to do it. It is the only large, colorful, academic ceremony that remains. We've decentralized commencements, and we no longer have university meetings. So we only have Charter Day left and we value it, and I hope it will continue.

Budgeting for Ceremonial Events

Riess: You say that half the budget comes from the president, but the other half comes from the campus?

- Wilson: The chancellor sets aside a certain amount of money from the Berkeley campus budget for public ceremonies. So from the Berkeley funds comes half, and half comes from the president's funds.
- Riess: Is this always a struggle, to keep the funds up for things like that and for the dedication commemoratives?
- Wilson: Very, very, very much a struggle because there will always be a vocal minority who will say, "Why spend any money on public ceremonies? What good do they do? It should go into the classroom. It should go into the laboratory, into research." Well, there is a very important psychological function served by an all-university event. There is a very important public relations purpose served. There is an important tradition that is preserved. How do human beings differ from animals anyway? It's in their rituals, is it not? In the traditions they establish, their ability to remember and to honor the past? It is a great human achievement to do that, and to say, "Do away with it all," would rob life of something that is very important to us, I think, as individuals.
- Riess: It must have been difficult in these last two years.
- Wilson: Yes, whenever the budget is small. But Chancellor Bowker has always been very wise and clever in concealing the actual costs of public ceremonies. He advances the same budget each year and he can point to the fact that the budget hasn't changed. The costs have gone up. But then when we're starting to go in the hole we ask for special funds and he may take that from discretionary funds or from gift funds and so on. He, in other words, sweetens the pot later on so we can do things half way decently. But it doesn't show up in the ledger of state funds.
- Riess: So you don't have somebody in Sacramento saying, "Five hundred dollars for balloons?"
- Wilson: Of course, all of that dedication (and we're speaking now of the dedication of the Bechtel Engineering Center), all that was done with their gift money for the building. There wasn't a dime from public ceremonies funds or from the chancellor's funds for that. They collected enough money for their own dedication.
- Riess: That's very nice, but what if they hadn't the funds?
- Wilson: If they hadn't we would have dug up what funds we could from the regular university funds. It probably would have been a much less elegant dedication because their own dedication included a series of learned seminars that went on all day and a luncheon for the

Wilson: participants and for invited guests, as well as the dedication ceremony and the balloons and then a banquet in the evening to honor Steve Bechtel himself. Also there's a beautiful book published in honor of all of the donors, of which there were over 1,200. Bechtel was the chief donor and there were other large gifts. But there were many, many smaller gifts and, as I said, about 1,200 donors were included in the book. So with private money they were able to do the building and the dedication, which had some real class. Without that we would have had to be contented with much less.

These commencement ceremonies, which are going on right now as this is June, 1980--we have anguished calls every day from various schools, departments, colleges, saying, "We just can't do any reception for the money we have. We have several hundred more people coming than we are budgeted for." We have to say, "We are sorry. We have no money, no money. It's all been given out."

The history department right now is in a tight spot because Governor Jerry Brown has decided to come and be the speaker. A niece of his is graduating and he promised her he would speak at her commencement. He is scheduled to come and the history department called us and said, "This news has increased the attendance by several hundred people. We can't have even a cup of punch out of the money we have. Is there any way?" We are now trying to dig up a little extra money. Now and then, a department doesn't use up its allotment and we're hoping we can find some unused funds so they'll be able to do a modest reception afterward. One of the real attractions of these smaller departmental and college commencements is that usually--and we ask that there be--there is some kind of social function following the commencement so parents will be able to meet the faculty members and students and get personal contact with the university which they wouldn't otherwise get.

We urge them all to have simple receptions and we think they are very important, so parents will feel that their child has not been lost in a big, impersonal place. This by and large is accomplished every year and the parents are astonished at the friendliness and the intimacy of these smaller ceremonies. We try to provide the money--although there might be an advantage in having a very skimpy reception because Governor Brown is known for his philosophy of lowered expectations. The history reception certainly won't be lavish!

Riess: Well, you could pass the hat after he speaks! [laughter]

Wilson: Yes, and make up for the deficit which we incur.

- Riess: "The members of the class will circulate among the crowd."
[laughter] Is there an honorarium for these speakers?
- Wilson: No, unless the department is able to arrange some funds for it themselves.
- Riess: But then back to Charter Days--
- Wilson: Oh, yes, there has always been an honorarium for the Charter Day speaker. It's always been fairly generous. When I first was involved, the honorarium was \$1,000 plus travel expenses for two.
- Riess: That was the late forties?
- Wilson: Yes. Now it's up to \$3,000 (the honorarium) and first-class travel expenses for two.
- Riess: That's very handsome.
- Wilson: It seems to us that when you know that a top-flight speaker like Kissinger asks for a \$10,000 fee, then you realize this is modest.
- Riess: But if you can only have the president for ten minutes...
- Wilson: I don't think the President of the United States ever accepts an honorarium.
- Riess: I wondered how many would waive it.
- Wilson: Waive it or divert it to a scholarship fund. It may be--I'm not sure--that the law forbids them to accept money. When we had Prime Minister Trudeau of Canada, he wrote that "your offer of an honorarium is handsome, but I cannot possibly accept it. I would be delighted if it were put into a fund to encourage more Canadian study at your university."
- Riess: Was there such a fund?
- Wilson: I think it was used for buying more books on Canada, more books published in Canada, for the library, and that's how his honorarium was spent.

Our fund-raising organization includes a group called the Sproul Associates, who started out by being those who pledged themselves to donate at least \$1,000 a year. (It's gone up, I think.) But Mr. Trudeau found himself a member of the Sproul Associates [chuckles] because he turned over his fee to the university, made it a donation to the university. We take great satisfaction

- Wilson: knowing that he now is again prime minister after a very smashing victory in the last election which saved the province of Quebec--and he is a member of that province, born and reared there--saved it from the continued agitation for separation.
- Riess: He was a fairly glamorous character in his own personal life, very much in the news at that time. Did he come with the equivalent number of body guards as other heads of state?
- Wilson: Yes, but it was a fairly quiet and subtle security surrounding him. Have we talked of Trudeau before?
- Riess: No.

Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, Charter Day 1977

- Wilson: He had been invited in 1976, and through some error, we determined later, the invitation never got to his personal attention. Some spokesman for him said that he was unavailable at that period. Later, Trudeau wrote to Chancellor Bowker, saying that he was mortified to realize that he had never been personally aware of this invitation because he would love to come and speak at the University of California, Berkeley. The chancellor immediately wrote him a letter asking him to come for 1977! [laughter] And he accepted, pending world crises. He came and was a very glamorous figure. He was due to arrive at the campus at twelve noon. We were having a large luncheon for him in the art museum.
- Riess: Wasn't the Duane Hansen show on at that time?
- Wilson: There was some Canadian work in there too. Anyway, the night before the security agents called me and said, "Professor Wilson, the prime minister would like to arrive quietly at ten o'clock, rather than twelve, and tour the campus. Would you be available to take him around?" I said, "I'd be delighted to, but this should be the privilege of the president of the university or the chancellor." Pause. The voice said, "We understand that the president doesn't know the Berkeley campus very well." I said, "Well, that's true."
- Riess: That was Saxon?
- Wilson: Yes, that was Saxon. He said, "We understand that the chancellor is a kind of shy, retiring person, and that you know a great deal of university history and you can talk easily and freely." I said, "Well, I think that may be true, but are you sure? I don't want to intrude." They said, "We'd like very much to have you do it." So I said, "Fine."

Wilson: So I met the prime minister at the Lawrence Hall of Science when he first arrived and was with him for two hours taking him around the campus. Then we ended up walking through Sproul Plaza and then walking up Bancroft Way to the art museum. He was remarkably charming and charismatic all the way through and handled himself so well with people.

Did I tell you the incident about the young lady at the Lawrence Hall of Science stepping up to him and saying, "When are you going to stop killing those seals up there--slaughtering the animals?" The prime minister stopped and smiled, looked down at her boots, and said, "Are those boots made of leather?" "Why, certainly," she said. "Wasn't an animal killed to make those boots?" [laughter] She gasped a little bit and had nothing more to say and he walked on.

Riess: I remember that there was a lot of picketing on that issue. Actually the fact that he dealt with it at all is unusual, I guess.

Wilson: He represents that English tradition that is used to heckling and knows how to meet it and he was extremely skillful in that.

But the security: I have a picture of myself with the prime minister walking up Bancroft and talking, and in the rear surrounding us are two or three security men, but obviously there is a photographer right ahead because he took a picture of the prime minister and me, and there is great alarm on two or three faces there in this picture. [chuckles]

Well, it was interesting because the reception party was waiting for a car outside the art museum. I had left word that didn't get to Saxon and to Bowker that he was touring the campus. I still thought we were going to draw up in a car and then suddenly the prime minister decided he wanted to walk, so there was no way of getting the word ahead of time. So they were waiting for a car and up we walked! [laughter] I was able to introduce them and they went into the museum and all of the guests lined up on the big ramp and they met him and he was perfectly charming.

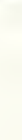
After the luncheon was over the car was parked right on the curb on Bancroft and there was a demonstration--a lot of demonstrators--across the street on Bancroft. The police were keeping them at that distance. Well, the prime minister saw them and immediately walked across the street and talked with them. They were flabbergasted. During his speech at the Greek Theater somebody got up in the audience at one part of the speech and yelled something at him. He stopped quietly, waved to him, and said, "I'm glad the tradition of free speech for which Berkeley is famous is being carried on. How are you up there?" [laughter] And that was the last. There was no more heckling.



Wilson helping Princess Margaret from her car. Still in the car is Lord Snowdon, then-husband of the Princess. Berkeley campus, November 6, 1965.



Wilson, His Royal Highness Prince Charles of England, Chancellor and Mrs. Albert Bowker. October 28, 1977, Berkeley.



Wilson leading Their Majesties King Paul and Queen Frederika of Greece up the steps to the President's House, November 1953.



Wilson and Prime Minister of Canada Pierre Elliott Trudeau on Bancroft Way after a walking tour of the campus. Morning of Charter Day, April 7, 1977. The men behind are all security men.

Wilson: After the ceremony, he was going to get into his car and here was another group of demonstrators. He walked over to them again and invited them to send some representatives to Ottawa: "If you've got problems you want to talk [about], I'll get you appointments with the right people and you can talk to them and bring your arguments and your case to them." They were so astonished that they didn't recover enough to take him up on the offer! [laughter]

He made a very eloquent speech. He impressed President Saxon so much that Saxon had copies of it made and sent out to a whole long list of friends and alumni of the university.

Riess: What was his topic?

Wilson: Something about idealism in the world and how we can develop it for the benefit of all nations and so on and the values we must preserve and defend and espouse and the problems that can be overcome if these values are maintained and that sort of thing. It was a very fluent and idealistic speech.

Making Contacts for Speakers

Riess: That's interesting, your saying that he didn't receive the invitation in 1976 and then this matter of Alistair Cooke not receiving his. Actually how does one make sure that a letter is opened and read by the right person? How do you flag things adequately? How do you have the right person at the other end?

Wilson: We usually make personal contact by telephone or by person to make sure that our invitation gets through.

Riess: Even before you--

Wilson: Yes, we try to sound out the person to be sure that he's interested. For example, Mayor [John V.] Lindsay of New York was our speaker, I think, in 1972.

Riess: In 1970.

Wilson: In 1970. All right, this was an incident which I relish remembering. Our chancellor in 1970 was Roger Heyns. He called me and said, "I heard that Mayor Lindsay has promised to make a speech at Stanford about the time of our Charter Day. Maybe we could get him to stop at Berkeley too because I think he would be an attractive person for Charter Day." I said, "So do I." He said, "I have a name to

Wilson: call back in the mayor's office, Steve Eisenberg." And he gave me the number. He said, "Will you call Mr. Eisenberg and see what the situation is?" So I called, and after going through a secretary I got Steve Eisenberg, and I explained very carefully, "This is Professor Wilson at the University of California at Berkeley. I'm chairman of public ceremonies and I want to inquire about the mayor's visit."

The voice said, "Garff?" I said, "Yes." "This is Steve. Don't you remember me? I graduated just a few years ago. I know you." I obviously said, "Why, of course, I remember you, Steve, but I can't believe this is you. What are you doing in the mayor's office?" "I'm on his calendar committee and I do various things with that." I said, "What a fortunate thing. Steve, we hear he's coming to Stanford and we want him for our Charter Day speaker." The result of this was that Steve persuaded the mayor that the charter ceremony at Berkeley was far more glamorous than any speech at Stanford.

So he made Berkeley his main speech and Stanford a secondary speech and we had a beautiful day that day. He was a very handsome guy and made a good speech and had a full theater. Between the end of his speech there and the alumni banquet, he took a helicopter to Stanford where Steve told me they had a half-filled auditorium and it was very gloomy. Then he flew back to San Francisco and appeared at the alumni banquet. Steve told me that he said, "You were right, Eisenberg. Berkeley is the glamorous place. It's not what I thought!"

Riess: That can't have done any good for goodwill between Berkeley and Stanford.

Wilson: They didn't know. They only knew that they had a date with Mayor Lindsay which he fulfilled. But we got the headlines. Well, we can't worry about that.

Another incident, and this is personal, was, of course, when Kennedy was here, that is Ted Kennedy, in 1975. We sent a delegation, a group, back to talk to him including George Link and our athletic director, Dave Maggard, because they were then organizing the Kennedy Games, a track meet in honor of John and Robert. It was held for two or three years and then stopped. That was part of the reason, but then they personally presented the Charter Day invitation and so we knew he got it.

Another curious contact which I relish remembering, again during Chancellor Heyns' term in office...it seems to me we mentioned this. Yes, we talked about the nonpolitical figures, artists and so on. We talked about MacLeish and I guess I told you about getting his number out of the International Who's Who?

Riess: No, you didn't tell me that.

Wilson: Again, Chancellor Heyns had talked to me and said, "Who can we get who is in the arts?" We thought about MacLeish, who was then a man in his seventies and had been a Charter Day speaker before, but he was still a mellow and respected figure, and the chancellor said to me, "Try to find out where he is and how we can get hold of him." So I looked in the International Who's Who and there was an address somewhere in New England and a phone number.

I said to myself, "This can't be a current phone number. How foolish. I will try writing a letter or note and see if he's there." Then I thought, "Why not try it just for fun?" So I dialed this number out of the blue and a mellow, masculine voice answered. I said, "Is this the residence of Mr. Archibald MacLeish?" The voice said, "It is." I said, "I'm calling long distance. I would like to speak to Mr. MacLeish." "This is Mr. MacLeish." I blurted out, "Good God!" He said, "What's the matter?" I said, "I can't believe it, Mr. MacLeish. I got your number out of the International Who's Who and here I get you on the first try!" Then he said, "But who is this?" I explained who I was and that I was calling for the chancellor and wanted to sound him out about being our Charter Day speaker and did he remember being here before.

"Oh," he said, "I remember it well. It was one of the happy experiences of my life. I have an engagement about that time to be in the Caribbean, but let me see if I can reschedule things, shuffle them around." He did and he came. So that's the story of another personal contact. We always follow up, of course, in a case like that with a very formal letter.

This last year with John Kenneth Galbraith, he had already been invited by the chancellor to be one of the speakers for the International House celebration. They were going to get back some famous alumni to make speeches and he had already accepted that. So we knew he was interested.

We had hoped to get the President of Egypt, Anwar Sadat, for last April's Charter Day. We had contacted the ambassador from Egypt to the U.S.A. and he was enthusiastic about such an invitation. We had had an emissary; Professor Lenczowski was in Egypt and talked to the foreign minister about this too. So we had personal contact and the story was that President Sadat was very interested, would love to come, but he said, "It would be too hazardous for you to count on me because with the way the world situation is and the way affairs are in the Middle East, I might have to cancel at the last minute and leave you empty-handed. So much as I would love to come--and I hope that I can come someday--I would be afraid to promise anything now." That was perfectly understandable.

- Riess: Now, who had to approve that? Would the regents have to approve any of these?
- Wilson: No, in the old days they did. But now the president and the chancellor are the ones who decide; the regents have delegated that responsibility.
- Riess: Wouldn't you have worried about an Israeli-Egyptian ruckus?
- Wilson: When you have had the Crown Prince of England and the Dalai Lama, when you've had Pope Shenouda III, when you've had kings and queens and presidents, well, we're accustomed to the problems involved and we firmly believed that it could be handled.
- Riess: How about a major Israeli statesman? Have you ever had one?
- Wilson: Some time ago we talked about Moshe Dayan but considered the situation so hot then we were afraid we couldn't handle it. But now, since there has been peace between Egypt and Israel, why, you could have an Egyptian. That's the real answer to that. Objectors would be other Arabs who are angry at Egypt for making a separate peace treaty, who are still angry at the Israelis. But not the Israelis because now they're friends and they're exchanging tourists, aren't they, between Egypt and Israel?
- So when we couldn't get President Sadat and when John Kenneth Galbraith had already accepted a date that came close, we parlayed with the International House people and said, "Let's have him come and be the Charter Day speaker and we will promise you to put your 50th anniversary on our charter celebration business and thus enlarge it for everybody." That's what happened, and as you know, he drew a very good crowd.
- I am convinced now after these many, many years that you don't get a big-name speaker by sending a letter, by putting it in a bottle and flinging it into the ocean and hoping it will arrive. You've got to know where the man is. You've got to have a personal contact with him, somebody close to him, before you issue the invitation.
- Riess: And Berkeley can get whomever they want? Like Harvard or Yale in that?
- Wilson: Oh, yes, Berkeley has an immense international reputation.

Takis Mouzenidis: A Summer in Greece

Wilson: I think I mentioned talking to Takis Mouzenidis, who was the senior director of the Greek National Theater? That is an example of our reputation. I was in Greece in the summer of 1964. Before I went to Greece that summer, Travis Bogard, who was chairman of the dramatic art department, said, "Find me a director over there, a young director who can teach us how to handle a Greek chorus. American directors don't know how to handle a Greek chorus. Only the Greeks seem to know how." I said, "Sure, I'll be glad to do it," and promptly forgot it.

I saw three plays that summer in Epidauros and they were all beautifully staged. In all of them the chorus was one of the stars. In the Ajax the chorus is very important, the chorus of sailors, as I remember it. It was so beautifully integrated as the real part of the whole dramatic impact that I remember it to this day. (Incidentally, when I went to London I saw another Sophocles play, done by the British National Theater, and their leads were very strong, but the chorus draped around the scenery and was not really a part and seemed a little embarrassed by being on the stage. There was all the difference in the world between those productions.)

So when I came back Bogard said, "Did you find me a young director?" I said, "Oh, I'm sorry, Travis, I forgot about it." I said, "But I did see two plays directed by Mouzenidis, who is the senior director of the Greek National Theater, and they seem to me to be awfully good." Bogard said, "Write to him and see if he will come." I said, "I can't write to him. You're the chairman. You write to him." "No, you saw his plays." "But you're the chairman." "But you saw his plays."

We went back and forth and he won and I lost, so I wrote a letter to Mouzenidis saying that I was a member of the dramatic art department and I had seen two of his plays and talked about them so enthusiastically that the chairman of the department wondered if he would be interested in coming the next spring and directing a play for us. I did feel as though I were sealing the letter in a bottle and flinging it into the ocean because I had not met the man and the only address I had was the Greek National Theater in Athens. Within two weeks I received a reply which I have never forgotten because after saying he was happy to have received my letter, he then went on to say that "the reputation of your university is so great that I would be honored to come anytime it can be arranged."

Wilson: The consequence was he came in the following spring and directed Antigone and it was a smash hit in the Greek Theater. He knew how to use the chorus, but he had very little time to train an American chorus so they had to simplify its participation in the play compared to what they do. The Greek National Theater has a permanent chorus which is trained to act in concert and yet as distinct individuals. They're not machines. You watch the chorus doing everything. Each has a developed character of his own depending upon the play being done and whom they represent. In Antigone the chorus represents the elders of Thebes, the elder statesmen of Thebes. In the Ajax it was sailors and so on.

Before the opening night Mouzenidis said, "This is so important we must have some V.I.P.s from Athens." So he--Mouzenidis--took it upon himself to invite a man named Papaspirou who was minister of cultural affairs, and then there were two others. I will never understand why they were invited, but we were delighted they came. The second man was the head of the Greek National Bank and the third was the youngest son of the prime minister, George Papandreou. His older half brother, Andreas, had been in our economics department for ten years. He is now in the opposition party in Athens. Anyway, we had these three V.I.P.s from Athens, and the chancellor--and at that point in time it was Acting Chancellor Martin Meyerson. [There was] a lovely dinner at the University House. In the Greek Theater they sat in the front row and we held up the performance for about ten minutes until they were all in their seats.

It was a very exhilarating and exciting evening and performance. It was given another night or two and it was one of the most successful we've ever had in the Greek Theater. Out of that visit actually grew the institute for the study of classical drama which the University of California statewide and the Greek government ran at Delphi for two years, and then discovered that its appeal was so limited they couldn't really make a go of it.

Riess: Was it done as a campus abroad sort of thing?

Wilson: Yes, it was a campus abroad. The first director of it was Travis Bogard from our campus there. They did produce a Greek tragedy with Mouzenidis directing it in the old theater at Delphi that first year.

Well, we became very good friends. Mouzenidis returned and gave two or three lectures here. His subsequent career is a bit strange; that is, he continued to direct at the Greek National Theater during the era of the colonels. When I saw him during that period in Athens he stoutly said, "I'm a director, an artist. I'm not concerned with politics and the plays that we do here are not concerned with politics. It's my life work and I shall continue," which he did.

Wilson: The colonels were very pleased to have him continuing. Evidently, some of the directors and some of the actors dropped out in protest. The same minister, Papaspirou, was put under house arrest during that time.

Then the colonels were overthrown and the democratic system was re-installed and Mouzenidis was in bad repute. He was asked, I understand, to leave the Greek National Theater, although the last I've heard from him he has ended up in the Greek National Theater in northern Greece. So he's directing up there. Papaspirou was returned as president of the parliament. So we have real close connections. The Greeks themselves are the most outgoing and friendly and loving people I think I have ever met. When you have met somebody at least once, man or woman, you embrace him the next time you meet him.

I remember when I said good-bye to Minister Papaspirou, he embraced me very warmly. He didn't speak English--he was speaking through an interpreter--and he said, "I want to issue you a formal invitation to visit me in Greece." I replied through the interpreter, "Thank you, I'd be honored to do so. I am happy to tell you I have several friends in Greece whom I enjoy visiting." His reply was, "I want to prove to you that I am your best friend in Greece!" [laughter] What an overwhelming and a gracious thing to say! By the time I got back to Greece the colonels were in control and I was not likely to take up that invitation.

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Wilson: In 1973 when I was in Greece I traveled with a younger man who has become a lifelong friend, Grover Garvin. He was a football star here. He lived under my roof. I went with Grover and his first wife to Greece in 1964 and then again in 1973 I was with Grover, who didn't have a wife at that time.

I told Mouzenidis we were coming and about the approximate date. One of the happiest sensations I know is the sensation of being a citizen of the world and having friends in other countries and feeling at home in other countries. Nineteen seventy-three was one of those occasions. I arrived at the hotel where I had stayed a couple of times before. It's a small, first-class hotel close to Constitution Square called the Astor Hotel. The hotel clerk, the head porter or the concierge or whatever you want to call him, remembered me and said, "Oh, we're delighted to see you again, Mr. Wilson. Oh, yes, and I have a couple of messages here for you." Imagine that!

One was from Mouzenidis which said, "You must come to Epidaurus tomorrow. It's the last performance of my production of Oedipus Rex. You must come and I'll be expecting you and I'll have tickets

Wilson: for you." Well, Grover Garvin and I said, "Why not? We'll be tired, but we should go." We unpacked and walked to Constitution Square to have an ouzo and here we ran into the guide whom I had met first in 1963 and had run into again in 1964; Takis Phlakis is his name. He embraced us and bought us another ouzo.

The next day we went out by bus to Epidaurus. We stayed in Nauplion and then we took a taxi to Epidaurus that night. Oh, the road was crowded, the whole area, the precinct of the theater, the sacred precinct, was just mobbed. I had no idea how we were going to find Mouzenidis. We finally found a little pavillion where there was a desk and asked where he was. (He had said he had a cottage there on the grounds.) The lady tried to tell us and while we were listening a voice said to me [with a Greek accent], "Professor! Aren't you Professor Wilson?" I turned and it was a stately Greek lady who said, "I met you in Dallas when you came down there to see a Mouzenidis production at the Dallas Theater Center. Don't you remember?"

"Of course, of course, but what are you doing here?" "Well, I spend half of my year [here]. I'm Greek. Takis is waiting for you. Let me take you there." So she sailed forward like a ship and ploughed her way through all of the people. We found Mouzenidis, who had been waiting for us, and had a bite to eat. Then we were ushered into the theater and seated on the front row and had the director bring up various people to meet us. Talk about feeling like citizens of the world! We were aware of American tourists sitting back wondering, "Who are these people?" They didn't know that we were so unimportant! It was a delightful experience.

Then Mouzenidis said, "Are you staying here?" No, we wanted to go back that night. He said, "This being the last production, we're having a busload of the cast and the crew go back. You can go back with them." That's what we did.

Then Mouzenidis said to me, "We're going to open"--I forgot what play it was--"for the Athens Festival to be done in the Graeco-Roman Theater of Herodus Atticus there. I want you to come to the opening. It's on such-and-such a night." I said, "If it's in Athens and I'm in Athens I will certainly come." I jotted it down and when the day came I was in Athens and I thought, "Well, it will be fun to go to the opening. I'll just buy a ticket and walk in." So I walked leisurely up to the theater and there was no crowd going in. There was no congestion on the street. I walked up and the ticket booth was closed, but I could see that the stage lights in the theater were on and I could hear voices.

I banged on the gate and a custodian came. My Greek is limited to about ten words. I pointed at myself and said, "Philios"--meaning friend--"Mouzenidis. Philios, Mouzenidis." "Oh!" He

Wilson: got it; I was a friend of Mouzenidis. He unlocked the gate, opened it, let me in, and I stumbled into a darkened theater and sat down. After my eyes got accustomed to the darkness, I looked around and there were only a few people scattered here and there. Pretty soon the lights came up and there was Mouzenidis sitting high up with a bullhorn. I discovered I was in on the final dress rehearsal! [laughter]

Riess: Oh, what fun!

Wilson: Yes, what fun! I had gotten the wrong night so I saw the dress rehearsal. Mouzenidis saw me and came scampering down and embraced me and insisted on introducing me to this, that, and the other-- "this professor from California" and whatnot--and again I felt, as I sat down there, what a dream come true! My first trip in 1962 I thought to myself how thrilling to be in this theater on the slope of the Acropolis, how thrilling to see a play in Greek, and, oh, wouldn't it be nice to feel at home here. And there I was, eleven years later, being greeted effusively at this dress rehearsal and knowing several people there. Well, you would only have an experience like that, I think, if you are a faculty member of the University of California. I guess all of these reminiscences were started by your saying, "If you sent an invitation with the University of California-Berkeley on it, just as if Yale or Harvard had sent it, will people recognize it and do something?" and that is the case.

More Charter Days

Wilson: Now we can go back to Charter Days. Do you have other people?

Riess: Yes, I do. How did having Barbara Tuchman come about? She was a woman. What did you do differently about that? You must have been conscious of it.

Wilson: Yes, and the fact that we figured that she wouldn't draw a huge crowd has nothing to do with her being a woman. Wilson Riles, who had been the personal choice of President Hitch, drew only a half-filled Zellerbach Auditorium, whereas Barbara Tuchman drew an overflow crowd.

Riess: Were women delegated to do particular things with her rather than men?

Wilson: They had a plainclotheswoman from our police force with her all of the time. Her husband called me some time before the event and said, "I'm a typical worrying husband and Berkeley has a reputation for being a very lively place and sometimes a dangerous place and I am concerned about Barbara, my wife."

I said, "You needn't be concerned, Mr. Tuchman, because having had all of the experiences we've had, we know how to handle everything. We now know how to take care of people and guard them and so she's much safer here than coming to a place that's not had the experience we've had and I assure you she will get absolute security." I related his concern to the chief and he said, "We'll put a person on her. We'll put one of our female members [on her]."

Barbara Tuchman was completely charming and ingratiating. The morning of Charter Day the Women's Center invited her to come and have coffee with them and answer questions and talk about problems. I wasn't there, but the reports I get indicate that she disappointed them tremendously because she was anything but a militant female. Among other things, she said, "I've always been proud of being Mrs. Tuchman. It never occurred to me to be ashamed of that. I'm proud of my husband. I'm proud of my being married." Then in the course of their discussion she said, "I've never found it a handicap to be a woman. I've always been able to do everything I've wanted to do and there have been no barriers placed in my way. So I'm a happy female." [laughter] So that was her stance and, as I said, she was completely at ease and perfectly charming and delivered a very--how would I describe it?--literary kind of address. It had quality and fine rhetoric in it.

Riess: Was she particularly in Rose Bowker's hands or was she treated differently in that way?

Wilson: No, no, I took charge of her just as I take charge of anybody who is a charter speaker. It was 1974. Bowker was chancellor, but Hitch was the president. Hitch did the presidential job, but he wasn't much of a host. Maybe he gave the dinner the night before for the charter speaker and for the Haas Award winner.

Riess: I wonder why Mr. Tuchman didn't come?

Wilson: I think he was a very busy man. I believe I asked him if he'd come and he said, "I can't get away." As I recall, he was an attorney and had too much to do and he couldn't get away at that time.

Riess: In general, do the wives come?

Wilson: Oh, yes, usually. Mrs. Trudeau did not accompany Pierre. She had already taken flight. Mrs. Galbraith was with John Kenneth.

Riess: When Ted Kennedy came, I guess—

Wilson: No, no, Ethel wasn't with him.

Riess: Joan wasn't with him?

Wilson: No. I don't know which is which! Sometimes they come and sometimes they don't come.

Riess: This matter of the honorarium and the honor, getting back to Kissinger. You certainly can't afford \$10,000 fees, but wouldn't Kissinger be willing to waive it?

Wilson: During the time that Charles Hitch was president, we tried to get Kissinger two or three times because they are good enough friends that a personal letter went from Hitch to Kissinger addressed "Dear Henry" and eventually, after weeks and months delay, he replied "Dear Charlie." But during that time, during the time of diplomacy by jet plane, Kissinger was much too involved and I couldn't gather from the letter that he was really very interested in coming here. Since that time, we have tried to get him. I suggested this to Chancellor Bowker once shortly after Kissinger had left public office and was still very much in the news, and Chancellor Bowker wasn't enthusiastic about it. He didn't want to invite him. So there hasn't been anybody who has expressed a real desire to have him since then.

Riess: How about a real desire to have Mr. Nixon?

Wilson: [chuckles]

Riess: There must be some tales of deciding not to have him.

Wilson: No, it was just understood that he was never of the caliber that would justify an invitation. My sense of him was that whenever his name came up in any academic circle, there was regret and shock that we had such a man in public office.

I remember his campaign against Jerry Voorhis when he won his first seat in Congress. It was a campaign of lies and vilification and dishonesty. I became an anti-Nixon person years ago. Then came his campaign against Senator Downey, his campaign against Helen Gahagan Douglas, and so on. He followed the same pattern. Then there was that shameful speech in which he beat his breast and tore his hair--talking about his little dog so-and-so and his Pat in her honest cloth coat and so on.

Wilson: I was teaching in the rhetoric department at that time and had a class or two where we could analyze the speech and all of our students said he simply never addressed the issue, he completely obscured the issue and substituted emotion and all kinds of side issues to cover up the thing, but never said anything.

Anyway, so far as I'm concerned, it's never been suggested. Always the campus police, well before Charter Day, sometimes after we've just finished one, would ask, "Who is it going to be next year?" I used to make them shudder by saying, "Nixon!" [laughter] But recently, after Nixon, they would say, "Who will it be?" I'd say, "If you won't tell anybody, I'll tell you it's going to be Idi Amin from Uganda. He's available now!" [more laughter] But they started to realize I was in jest.

Riess: Conant came a couple of times, earlier.

Wilson: Conant was a very good friend of Robert Gordon Sproul and the first time he spoke here alone it was as a good buddy of Sproul. The second time it was as high commissioner for West Germany and he came with Konrad Adenauer. Again, it was Sproul who asked him to come. It was his personal connection and Conant had a very high regard for the university.

I remember a private appearance he made at the Faculty Club one evening. There was, I guess, a dinner for him and any faculty members who wanted to could stay and listen. He was going to speak and answer questions. He mentioned what a long-standing friendship he had with Sproul and what a friendly rivalry it had been. He said, "I must confess that I have great difficulty in luring any faculty members away from Sproul but, by golly, he has a hard time luring them from me too!" So evidently there was a friendly rivalry.

I also discovered then that Sproul had sort of an unwritten agreement with Stanford that we would not raid each other's faculties. I don't know whether that agreement still exists or not. I think it doesn't because Stanford took away [N. Scott] Momaday, our native American writer, from the English department. So that might not exist.

Well, anyway, the second time Conant was here he brought with him Konrad Adenauer and that was a memorable Charter Day too. Adenauer gave one of the speeches and Conant gave the other. Adenauer spoke, of course, in German and there were enough Germans in the audience so if there was a laugh line people laughed, or if there was another reaction they would get it. Then the interpreter would repeat and then the English audience would get it. Adenauer

Wilson: was an impressive old man and fulfilled all of the press reports about his as being this granite-like figure--strong, firm, immovable, and so on. He was very old at the time, but the strength was there. Conant was a very humane and warm person too. They made a good pair for Charter Day.

Riess: How about Russians and Chinese, as those areas have become more thinkable?

Wilson: During the war we had Jan Masaryk, who was a refugee at the time from the Nazis, and then he was a refugee from the Communists. But I wasn't here. I was away then. I haven't heard of a Russian being thought of in postwar times, but I do recall that Robert Gordon Sproul, when asked that question, "Why don't you invite a Russian to speak?" said, "I invited Gromyko to come here, after the United Nations was formed in San Francisco, to receive an honorary degree. Gromyko didn't even have the courtesy to reply to the letter yes or no. He simply ignored it. So I decided not to invite any more Russians." [laughter] And that's the case.

Although when we had one of our commemorative convocations, the Russian ambassador Molotov did appear in the Greek Theater and sat on the stage. He was announced as he came in and that's all. He did not participate in anything. Well, does the American public know anybody who could give a speech in English or even in Russian who would be well known?

Riess: Solzhenitsyn.

Wilson: Yes, but he would cause the Russians to be very unhappy with us, wouldn't he?

Riess: That's what I'm wondering.

Wilson: You're talking about a refugee. Now, that could create a problem. With detente so shaky, I don't know whether it would be wise. It always astonishes me that we have to be careful of the world scene. Here in Berkeley, California, we have to be careful of the repercussions in world politics. During a presidential election year it is the policy not to invite people who are going to be active candidates because the university does not want to align itself, say, by inviting a senator running for re-election, or Carter running for re-election, or Reagan running for election. We stay away from that and try to get somebody who has retired or somebody who is not in politics.

Riess: Earl Warren spoke several times.

Wilson: Two times. The first time was to help President Sproul out of a bad hole. The first choice was a speaker who had agreed to come and couldn't come, as I recall. I don't remember who it was, but Earl Warren and Robert Gordon Sproul had been buddies since their undergraduate days. In that case in '54 Sproul called his old buddy and said, "We need you, Earl." Earl said, "Okay, I'll make arrangements to come and be your speaker."

The second time he spoke at Charter Day was in 1968. That was our centennial year and we wanted to get a galaxy of speakers, some of whom would represent our distinguished graduates, and that was the reason Warren was included. Since the race problem was exceedingly acute in '68, we wanted to have the black community represented, and we had two black men, Roy Wilkins, and Thurgood Marshall from the Supreme Court. The two who were graduates were Earl Warren, and Rudolph Peterson, who was then president of the Bank of America and represented great success in the field of business. So it was quite a well-balanced program.

Warren also spoke, as I recall, at the convocation organized by the Academic Senate in an attempt to stop the student rebellion in December of '64. I think he was on the platform. There was a reception for him afterwards in the afternoon at the Faculty Club. By now he was an older man, and we had a room where he could rest. There was going to be a dinner in his honor. His host said, "Now, would you like to go and rest?" "Certainly not," said Earl Warren, "If there are people to meet and talk to, I want to meet them!" So he stood and went right from the reception to the dinner. I think that was the occasion. He was a man of iron and integrity.

Riess: He probably got a lot of his support from the university.

Wilson: Oh, yes.

Riess: I'm going to zip down the Charter Day list and see if there are any which we should flag for further comment. [refers to list] There is Viscount Alexander of Tunis, Governor General of Canada. Do we have a comment about him?

Wilson: Yes, I wasn't very close in that year because it was before I became chairman. But I do recall the comment that he arrived in a private plane with all of his male buddies (no women went along) and two or three cases of good scotch and good Canadian whiskey, and they had a great time! [laughter]

Riess: Regardless!

Wilson: Regardless of anything else. That's the only comment I can make about Viscount Alexander.

Riess: Then Chester Nimitz? He was an old Berkeley friend too, I guess.

Wilson: Yes, he was a good friend; he was famous here because he had founded the Navy ROTC unit and was the first commandant of that unit. Then he became the hero of the Pacific war on the water. He came back and lived in Berkeley and was a regent for a while and then resigned from that, he didn't care for that business. But the situation with him is that he was another substitute at the last minute when the main speaker who had agreed to couldn't come. Nimitz was another close friend of Sproul's and so Sproul could say, "Chester, we need you." As a man of duty he responded and made a good speech and attracted a good crowd because he had a dazzling name.

In those days Sproul had a completely different philosophy about the main speaker. He, in conjunction with some of his friends on the regents, alone chose the speaker. It was his policy to keep it a deep, dark secret from anybody. Agnes Robb might know it, but you would never get a hint from her. Then at last, when it came time to publicize it, he would suddenly spring this dazzling name on the public. One of the big guessing games that went on was who was going to be a speaker. I wasn't told even who had agreed to speak, even when I was chairman, until Sproul got ready to divulge the secret.

I remember being flattered once when he called me in Los Angeles during a Thanksgiving break and asked me if I would approve of T.S. Eliot as the speaker. I said, "Oh, of course!" "How many would he draw?" I said, "He would draw the whole literary world of the Bay Area." He never got T.S. Eliot. But anyway, Sproul kept it a secret, and that was his policy, not to tell anybody. So it may be that I never knew who was the first--I probably never knew who was the first choice. Not until he had a speaker for sure and was ready to announce it, did he divulge the information.

When the announcement was made very late, you knew that trouble had developed. But now there is not that feeling at all. If a man has accepted, if a person has accepted, why, we're happy to tell. We don't publicize it through official channels so that the media gets it, but if anybody needs to know, we tell.

Who else?

Riess: Lewis Douglas, former U.S. ambassador to Great Britain?

Wilson: I don't remember him at all.

Riess: All right. Arthur Goodhart, master of University College, Oxford?

- Wilson: I have a vague memory that he was scholarly and drew only a modest-sized crowd.
- Riess: Are these still friends of Sproul?
- Wilson: That's right.
- Riess: Then we had the inauguration of Clark Kerr as chancellor in 1953; then Earl Warren; then Harold W. Dodds in 1955, president of Princeton.
- Wilson: Yes, he was another scholarly man and, oh, made a forceful and interesting speech. I don't recall the subject, but it wasn't a huge Charter Day with an overflow audience. Very often, I have discovered, these university presidents feel that they owe it to each other to invite each other to speak on ceremonial occasions, commencements and so on.
- Riess: Then in 1957 you had Nagy, the former premier of Hungary. Was that controversial at all?
- Wilson: No.
- Riess: Nineteen fifty-seven was when the revolution was going on in Hungary.
- Wilson: That's right.
- Riess: Had he come out with the exodus?
- Wilson: Yes, yes, he was a refugee and attracted a great deal of sympathy. As I recall, [he] had a good crowd and made a good speech, but Sproul took care of him and I didn't have much personal contact. I took care of making the arrangements for the ceremony and so on, but not the personal--
- Riess: Most of those Hungarians were tragic figures at that time.
- Wilson: Yes, I knit my brow when I remember him and wonder--I don't remember whatever happened to him either, whether he is still alive, living in exile, did he die? I just remember him with sadness.
- Riess: Then Norman MacKenzie, president of the University of British Columbia.
- Wilson: That was a rainy Charter Day, which meant we used Harmon Gym.
- Riess: That was big enough?

Wilson: It was plenty big enough and the rain gave plenty of reason for saying, "The audience never comes when it's wet." I recall him as being friendly but quite undistinguished.

Riess: Then skipping down to 1961, Dean Rusk?

Wilson: Oh yes, he was a lovely man, as the Swedes say. I learned that expression. You would not use that in America, but all my Swedish friends use it. "He's a lovely man."

Riess: He had a daughter in the area.

Wilson: Yes. Well, his wife comes from this area and he taught at our law school for a while and had lots of Bay Area connections. But before he was announced as our speaker, we didn't know--nobody was aware--his son was here. Then it was discovered his son was going to college here and working his way through by being the houseboy at the Alpha Phi House. How many countries could that be true in, that the son of the minister of foreign affairs is working his way through college by being a houseboy? By now, it was '61 and so--

Riess: He was with Kennedy. He was secretary of state then.

Wilson: That's right, and it was the year before Kennedy came himself as Charter Day speaker. Kerr was the president then. I remember the luncheons were smaller and held at the University House. I remember being included in those luncheons, and I remember the secretary was circulating around. I had met him, and a couple of students who had been invited from the student body leadership came and said, "Oh, we haven't met the secretary of state. Will you introduce us?" I said, "Surely."

So I walked over and waited a moment until he finished talking and I said, "Mr. Secretary, here are a couple of our student leaders who would like to meet you. Secretary Rusk, this is So-and-So and So-and-So." The secretary of state stood there (I was on his right) and he put his arm around my shoulder and talked to the students just like an old buddy, and I thought, "Where's the photographer?" [laughter]

He was genial, he was mellow, he was a crowd-gatherer and a crowd-pleaser. I remember that as one of the very successful Charter Days. He had a lot of his relatives and friends and Berkeley connections here, so he was a perfect choice for the occasion.

Riess: Then we had the Kennedy inauguration and then Kenneth ^{Pitzer}~~Pfizer~~ and Wally Schirra.

Pitzer

Wilson: Yes. Ken ~~Pfizer~~ had been our dean of the College of Chemistry for years. When Kerr became president and left the job of chancellor, Pfizer, I am told, was a very strong candidate to succeed him, and then did not succeed him and was exceedingly disappointed. So when he was offered the presidency at Rice he took it. Evidently the top administration and Kerr felt unhappy, and inviting him to come back as charter speaker was a way to mollify him and to make him feel better about the university, and he did. But obviously, he could not be counted on to attract a crowd because he had been around for so many years and everybody had known it. So Dick Hafner and I proposed to the powers-that-be if we could get the money to entice an astronaut here, maybe we could attract a crowd by putting him on the program. But it was another rainy Charter Day! [laughter] This was one of the rainy days we had after I had made the pact with the devil to give us a good day in 1962 for Kennedy! So we didn't have an awfully good crowd. We blamed it on the weather, and we didn't have memorable speeches from either of the principal speakers, but we got by, we got by.

I remember Schirra ran up an horrendous bill at the Fairmont Hotel where we put him up! [laughter]

Riess: I remember the next one, Adlai Stevenson and U Thant.

Wilson: Oh, indeed. Adlai Stevenson had spoken once before, and everybody knew him as one of the most gracious and witty of men.

But I see it's 3:15 and I have a car to pick up at 3:30. Let's begin with Adlai Stevenson next time because I have happy memories of him.

Robert Frost and Carl Sandburg##

[Interview 14: June 16, 1980]

Wilson: We tend to bracket Frost and Sandburg as two of the grand old men of American poetry, but the contrast between the two I found surprising and very disappointing as regards Sandburg.

In my little memoir about Robert Frost [appended] I neglected to mention one occasion during his first visit of 1947. I was then teaching courses in the oral interpretation of poetry and there were a great many such courses in the speech department. It seemed logical, since Frost was going to be here for several days, that we should arrange some kind of an affair so the students interested in

Wilson: poetry, interested in him, would have a chance to meet him. We wrote to Frost and proposed a student reception where he could meet students who were interested in his work, and through his secretary he wrote back a very warm response that he loved meeting and talking with students and he would be delighted to do this.

So we arranged a reception in the women's club rooms at the old Stephens Union which were the best-maintained of the club rooms. The separate men's club rooms were always a little shabby. We had selected students and classes and so on and there must have been--

Riess: Rather than the Faculty Club?

Wilson: Oh, yes. We wanted a student affair, and at least two hundred students showed up.

I escorted Frost there, because that was my job in 1947, and he was so perfect with those students that I've never forgotten it. He came in and they all lined up to shake his hands and he talked to each one of them separately and then he said, "Let's sit down and discuss poetry." So he sat down on a sofa and the students arranged themselves on the floor and chairs all around.

As I think I've said before, he's a marvelous raconteur, and they'd ask him a question and that would remind him of something else. Then somebody would hand him a book of his poems and say, "Would you read this?" He said [imitates low, rough voice], "Well, no, I'll say you a poem; I'll say a poem for you." This wonderful rapport developed between them. They looked at him with adoration and he stayed over the allotted time and signed autographs for anybody who wanted them. Finally, we were able to drag him away from them.

Riess: Was he on a lecture circuit?

Wilson: No, no, this was just one of the courtesies he extended. He was here to get the honorary degree in '47 and so we asked him to do this thing with the students and he did it beautifully.

It was so successful that two years later when Sandburg had been asked to be the speaker at a university meeting, we decided we would do the same thing. We wrote to Sandburg through his agent or his secretary, outlined what we had done with Frost, and asked him if he would do the same thing. The answer came back, "Certainly, Mr. Sandburg will be delighted to do this."

Well, somebody didn't know Sandburg or somebody was speaking out of turn because when I escorted him into the club room with two hundred students there, and he saw all of these students, he

Wilson: reacted as though he had been slapped and said something [in frantic voice], "I can't meet all these people, I can't meet all these people!" I said, "But Mr. Sandburg, you agreed to this reception." "I did not! I did not!" We tried to steer him in and he walked off into a corner and turned his back on the room. He absolutely refused to shake any hands, to answer any questions, to be sociable, just like a spoiled prima donna. He finally left and we were all embarrassed and the students were absolutely incredulous at this man.

He was going to stay with the George Stewarts, but they had some other affair and could not meet him upon his arrival. I was asked to meet him, as I had Robert Frost, and then take him to my home and offer him a cup of coffee and so on and keep him there until the Stewarts were back home. They were going to call me and say, "Now," when they could accept him as a guest. So I met him, and he was friendly and cordial to me, and I took him to my home.

I was then living in a rented house up on Hilldale Avenue and a young member of the chemistry department was living with me. We were sharing the rent then. My friend owned a guitar which he played sometimes. Sandburg arrived without his guitar. He saw this one standing in the corner of the room. He immediately went over and took it up and said, "Whose is this?" I said, "It belongs to Bert Tolbert, who is an instructor in the department of chemistry." He sat down and immediately tuned it and started to strum on it, and he said, "Good guitar." I said, "Yes."

He said, "Do you think he would lend it to me because I would like to have a guitar while I'm here?" I said, "I think he'd be honored." He strummed on it a little more and he said, "I'll buy it from him. Do you think he'll take \$50 for it?" I said, "I'm sure it's not for sale, Mr. Sandburg." He said, "I'll give him \$100 for it." I said, "He's told me that he never wants to sell this." He said, "I'll offer him \$200 for it." I said, "Well, I'll convey the information, but I doubt he'll sell it." [Sandburg added,] "If he doesn't take the offer he'll always have the satisfaction of telling his friends he turned down \$200 from Carl Sandburg for his guitar!" [laughter] Sandburg carried that guitar with him all during his visit.

At the university meeting he talked, and if you listen to any of his records you will know that he has developed a particular style of speaking. He has a very resonant voice and he holds onto various words. He would stop in mid-phrase. He waited for the end of the phrase and then it would come. He was a good showman. The student audience just loved him. Then at the end of the program

Wilson: he got out Bert Tolbert's guitar and played and sang for the audience. Oh, he was a tremendous hit. Such a different personality when he was performing for an audience than when he was supposed to be friendly to a small group.

The Stewarts had a party for him at their house. They had invited a lot of faculty people and townspeople who were interested in the arts and poetry and so on. Sandburg couldn't get out of it because he was staying with them, but he acted temperamentally and somewhat ungraciously. He did shake some hands and take some refreshments. Then they urged him to say something or to read a poem, and that was when he decided no, he won't say anything or read anything, but he'll sing them a song.

So again with the guitar he sat down and he tuned it and strummed it, and to the tune of "God Bless America" he sang a song, the words of which went "God Damn Republicans, scum of the earth" and so on! [chuckles] It was shocking and insulting to many of the people who were there who happened to be Republicans.

Riess: How do you account for all of that? At first I thought maybe he was just shy.

Wilson: No, he is a man who, I think, is spoiled and who is temperamental and who liked to unburden himself of his irritations by doing those things. When he was before a big audience or before the press, I noticed, he was everybody's grandfather type. But then he could be very rude and uncooperative when he was with a few people.

Riess: How old was he in 1949 or where was he in his career?

Wilson: He had a shock of white hair and most of his writing had been done. I think the Lincoln biography was still to come out then. But he was a household word and name at that time, exceedingly famous.

Riess: So he had been lionized?

Wilson: Yes, he had been.

Riess: But what about Frost?

Wilson: He had been lionized too, but he was of quite a different temperament. Frost seemed to enjoy people and expanded with them and gave of himself with them, and delighted in a give and take and rambling on about himself and about his experiences and so on. Every time Frost talked there should have been a tape recording of it.

- Wilson: I remember a long, long narrative at one of my meetings with Frost in which he told how he was responsible for getting Ezra Pound freed. When Pound returned from Italy he was under indictment as a traitor and I guess they incarcerated him--is it St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington, D.C.?
- Riess: That's right.
- Wilson: Frost had this marvelous story full of irony and chuckles of how he had gone first to one cabinet minister and then to another. I don't recall the story, unfortunately, but I think he ended up with the secretary of state and they just together concocted a way they could get him out of St. Elizabeth's Hospital. "He is an old man now, off his rocker." "He is no harm or no danger to anybody else and he should be allowed to fade away in peace." It was a remarkable story. I hope it's preserved someplace. I'm sure he must have told it before.
- Riess: Did both of these men travel alone?
- Wilson: They both traveled alone, yes, because I vividly remember Frost in '47 got off that train alone and so did Sandburg and they were the only ones in my car--no secretaries, no--
- Riess: No wives? Frost did have a wife somewhere.
- Wilson: No, I think she was dead by this time.
- Riess: How about Sandburg?
- Wilson: I think he had a wife that was alive, but she didn't come with him.

Dylan Thomas

- Wilson: One other memoir of a poet (since we're on poets), and this is a very brief one, was of Dylan Thomas.
- Riess: Oh, was he here?
- Wilson: Dylan Thomas was here a couple of times on his lecture tours. He was not a university meeting lecturer, but the Committee on Arts and Lectures had hired him and he filled Wheeler Auditorium to overflowing and entranced his audience with his wit and with the richness of his voice too, and with his readings of many of his poems.

Wilson: After the first time he was here--I can't remember the date, but it was after Dwinelle Hall was built, opened, in the middle 1950s--since we were teaching the oral study of poetry, our chairman, then Gerry Marsh, and several other people said, "Why don't we hire Dylan Thomas to come and teach poetry for at least a semester or two? It would be a great experience for the students." The department met and was enthusiastic. Everybody was enthusiastic about this prospect.

We understood--we were fully aware--that Dylan Thomas had a drinking problem. We didn't know how serious it was and we didn't know at the time that it [the job at Berkeley] might have been the straw that the drowning man could have clung to. So we took the recommendation to the dean of the College of Letters and Science to ask for a special appointment for at least one semester.

The dean then was Dean Davis (his nickname was "Sailor" Davis) and he turned it down with shock, "Why, we can't expose our students to this man who drinks all of the time." We argued, "But he is the great poet of our time. Whether he is drunk in class, does that make any difference? He talks beautifully when he's drunk or sober." But Dean Davis wouldn't hear of it. So he was never offered the appointment.

When he died in 1956 or '57, the whole world who knew his poetry felt guilty and responsible. I can assure you that the speech department at Cal felt the same way, although they had done their best. It turned out that he was absolutely penniless and had all kinds of debts and needed some framework of stability. He wasn't able to write then and somehow the world had failed him.

My little personal recollection was that after this lecture tour when we got the idea that he would be good for our department, Gerry Marsh took him to lunch to talk about whether he would like to teach at Cal. Around 1:15 or 1:20 I heard a knock at my office door in Dwinelle Hall. I opened it and here was Gerry with the poet Dylan Thomas. Gerry said, "I'm so sorry, I have a class at two and I have to prepare, but Mr. Thomas doesn't have another appointment until two o'clock. Would you take care of him until that time?" I said, "I'd be honored to." We shook hands--a cherubic man, round face and a bulbous nose, and flushed. (I learned later from Gerry Marsh that they had had lunch, but his lunch had consisted of six beers. That's all.)

Riess: Oh, dear, that's so self-destructive.

Wilson: That's right.

Wilson: We talked just two or three minutes, and I hadn't known about his lunch, so I said, "Is there anything I could offer you or that you would like to do?" He said, "Well, let's go and have a glass of beer if you don't mind." I said, "Fine. I'll take you to Blake's Rathskeller." So Dylan Thomas and I went down, and I sat half an hour with him while he had two more glasses of beer, not knowing what he had had before, and then I took him to his next appointment. But I must say he carried himself well. He wasn't staggering and he didn't--

Riess: What did you talk about?

Wilson: I have forgotten. It couldn't have been very significant. It must have been chitchat. I couldn't get him to open up and talk about himself or about his work. Robert Frost was the easiest man in the world to talk to. Just suggest any subject and it reminded Frost of six other subjects. Well, I shall always remember those thirty minutes with Dylan Thomas. I had been chairman of the faculty committee of our department to recommend him and we had been enthusiastic about the recommendation. When he died shortly thereafter, an impoverished man who destroyed himself, there's no question but he needed help, and in the world somebody should have helped him.

Dylan Thomas made two tours of the United States which enabled him to make a little money, because he was immensely popular, but never gave him the stability or the framework which I still think an appointment in an understanding department would have done. Such an appointment would allow him to come and go and share of himself as he wanted, but also would assure him of an income and a salary. That just might, a remote possibility, it might have saved the man for posterity. But we didn't do it.

Riess: Yes, and the speech department would have been really a perfect department. That would have been so nice. Was there any gesture from the English department in support of this?

Wilson: No.

Riess: Did you propose it to them?

Wilson: No. We thought that the idea was so great it would be approved. I don't know whether Gerry Marsh went to the English department and asked for their help to try to persuade the dean to do it or not, but that was it.

Riess: Did Dylan Thomas write sober?

Wilson: No, he was in a state of paralysis. One of the last things he finished was Under Milk Wood because it was given its premiere in New York City at the Brooklyn YMCA and somebody was somehow lucky enough or farsighted enough to put a microphone on the floor and there is a recording of that first performance. I own a copy of it. There are other polished performances of it, but Dylan Thomas himself was the narrator in the first performance and it was a smash hit. It's a beautiful piece of writing, just stunning.

When I taught reader's theater, Under Milk Wood, of course, is the perfect vehicle for reader's theater. We always ended the term by studying and reading that in class and I would intersperse our own interpretations with listening to the sections from the premiere production of it, and then listening to the one where Richard Burton is the narrator.

Riess: Did Dylan Thomas accept the idea that he was already being studied at universities?

Wilson: Yes, and he used to make cracks about that. I can't remember what he said, but it always got a laugh when he would make cracks about it, reaching that exalted status of being studied.

Riess: Did the beat poets have a place on campus?

Wilson: If they did, it was on the steps of Sproul Hall. [laughter] No, they were never part of any public ceremony that I know of nor even part of any English department series, although they might have been.

Riess: Or any part of the speech department.

Wilson: Well, whether you call them the beat poets--what is the name of that man that committed suicide? His name escapes me. He taught in our department for a semester and he was a much admired contemporary poet, and [there were] two or three others here.

Riess: In that case it was once again speech rather than English?

Wilson: That's right. When Lillian Hellman came as a regents' lecturer here, again the speech department was interested in having her come and she was interested in coming. We said, "What can you teach or what would you like to teach, Miss Hellman?" She said, "Name it anything you like, I always teach the same thing!" [laughter]

Riess: And what is that, pray tell?

Wilson: Well, it's about playwrighting and about life in general and her values and what she has discovered about society and so on, which would have been invaluable. She was very happy to come, but I guess the budget restriction was such we were unable to do it.

Riess: It sounds like you had a bunch of good schemers there in the speech department.

Wilson: Oh, yes, we thought it would be great to expose our students to the creative writers and we did do it pretty well. My mind is blank on the writers who were our visitors and taught for a while.

Riess: Does that mean that there was some allowance in the budget?

Wilson: When a regular faculty member had a sabbatical leave for a term, then we'd go for a poet or somebody to fill that gap. Teaching reader's theater, we were teaching oral study of poetry, oral study of drama, and we could bring in creative people. We couldn't perform or act a play because that is the province of the department of dramatic art. But we can give a reader's theater performance of a play and that belongs in the speech department.

Riess: Speaking of unpleasant personalities--having the potential to be unpleasant--did Frank Lloyd Wright ever come?

Wilson: No, never met him, never met him. I'm not conscious that he was ever on the campus. Is he listed someplace?

Riess: No, he isn't, but when you described Sandburg it reminded me of things I had heard about Wright.

That Carl Sandburg university meeting in 1949 is the first one that is listed in the records that I took from you.

Wilson: What other names are on the list there?

Alfred Kinsey

Riess: Then that year you had Alfred Kinsey and Jawaharlal Nehru.

Wilson: Yes, and I have vivid memories of both of them. Actually, it was Robert Gordon Sproul who said to me one day, "Kinsey is the most notorious name in the U.S.A. today. Let's try to get him for a

Wilson: university meeting. Draft a letter." I drafted a letter to Alfred Kinsey inviting him and in due course back came a letter saying he only accepted speaking engagements in return for a favor that might be done him. He said, "Otherwise I have no time for my research. Everybody is asking me to speak and offering me huge sums," and obviously this was true.

He said, "It does happen that I have a favor to ask you, and if you will grant me the favor I will come and make not one speech but several appearances in different circumstances.

"We find that we need more interviews in your area. I'll bring two or three members of my staff and we'll complete our interviews. We have some more to take at San Quentin and some more from the general population. If you will provide us office space and help us in getting these interviews, we would be glad to be at your disposal, and I will speak at a public meeting and I will also speak at a seminar or for a class."

President Sproul said, "By all means, we'll find office space for them. Negotiate a date." So we did and the Kinsey group--there were only three of them, I think--came with Dr. Kinsey.

Of course, when it was made public that Kinsey was coming to do some work on the campus, there was a great clamor from the press for a public press conference. It was held in the old extension building. They had a conference room and it was packed. I was in there before Dr. Kinsey arrived and all of the reporters were full of lewd remarks and ridicule.

When Dr. Kinsey walked in, here was a man of utmost dignity and gravity. He had grey, crewcut hair. He had a fine, quite, dignified face and this very grave manner, and he talked in that same way with utmost seriousness and gravity. All of the reporters calmed down and became very respectful and very attentive to what he had to say. Wherever he went, wherever he spoke, there was nothing of the sensational about him.

Riess: Yet Sproul had said this is one of the most notorious--

Wilson: I may have put that word in his mouth. He might have said, "This is one of the most interesting people in public life now," or he might have said "notorious," but anyway, Sproul was very conscious of the dignity of the university and had he not realized this man was a real scholar and doing pioneer work, he never would have, just for the sensation of it--Sproul would never have done that.

Wilson: That impression of Kinsey remained and was strengthened all the time he was here. He spoke at a university meeting in Harmon Gymnasium and it was packed to the rafters, of course. He spoke very frankly and with the utmost scholarly seriousness. There was no giggling and no embarrassed laughter and so on. He asked the audience for help. He would like to have a sorority to volunteer to give their histories, histories of their sexual experiences and development, but he would only take a group as long as 90 percent or more volunteered.

Those who were shocked and horrified at Dr. Kinsey and his research all said, "You can't trust those statistics because he is only picking out the extroverts." They didn't read the book. They didn't know he took some individual histories, but he took group histories--if 90 percent or more of the group would volunteer. He said he wanted a fraternity, and then he wanted a boarding house group, and so on, and anybody who was interested could meet him on the platform after the meeting. He was flooded with offers. He had to pick and choose.

Riess: Were those university meetings an irregular occurrence?

Wilson: President Sproul aimed to have three a semester while we were on the semester system. We didn't always have that many, three in the fall and three in the spring. Often one of the fall meetings was the Christmas university meeting where we had nothing but music. It was the last one of the fall term. Sometimes in the spring a traditional meeting was one where six of the prominent graduates, members of the senior class, gave their little farewell speeches. That used to be tremendously popular but then kind of died out. University meetings depended upon what notable people were available. President Sproul kept very close track of who was coming through and he had his ways of discovering who was coming through. You didn't schedule a meeting on such-and-such a date and then thrash around and look for a speaker. You waited until somebody was coming and then you offered him [a time], and they were never paid anything except the honor of speaking here. That's the way we got them, and we had a galaxy of speakers.

Riess: When you say he had his way of keeping track, do you mean just through friends?

Wilson: I think just through friends, and I'm sure he kept in touch with the World Affairs Council. They know. He probably kept in touch with the Commonwealth Club, too. So he was very much aware--just by reading the newspapers.

Riess: Did Kinsey give seminars?

Wilson: Yes, he appeared at a graduate seminar in zoology, human biology, and I think at a couple of classes. He was here quite a while.

I heard that Kinsey himself was a great music lover, a symphony fan, and I had season tickets to the symphony in San Francisco. On one occasion I had an extra ticket and asked him if he'd like to go. He said he would love to go, but he had scheduled some important interviews that night and couldn't go. But he said, "My assistant is also a symphony fan and would love to attend." (That assistant is the man who is now head of the Kinsey Institute, Paul Gebhart.) We had a delightful time, not only at the symphony, but I plied him with questions.

I remember most vividly asking, "You have such a small staff. I'm surprised that you don't hire more people." He said, "If we only could find them!" I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "To do the kind of interviews we do requires a man who is a completely objective scholar, and a man who is not embarrassed by anything, and a man who has sympathy with every form of human sexual behavior, no matter how bizarre it's considered to be by the general public." I said, "What do you mean sympathy?"

"You've got to identify with that person and to understand his feelings of attraction. I saw Dr. Kinsey for months struggling with the form of attraction called necrophilia; that was the hardest thing for Kinsey himself to understand, to have some feeling for, and he conquered his aversion to it. When we try to find people to act as interviewers, and we discover that they betray their aversions, we can't hire them. Our people have got to be completely and utterly sympathetic."

Riess: That is interesting.

Wilson: It was fascinating. (Later on, Dr. Kinsey played a return engagement here.) He was invited to come and give the Jake Gimbel Lectures. They are lectures in the realm of sex, and Kinsey obviously was qualified. He gave about four lectures. They were all scheduled for Wheeler Auditorium, but they would turn away hundreds every time.

The last lecture was called "Concepts of normality and abnormality in human sexual behavior," and we knew that was going to attract thousands. I don't know whether it was Chancellor Kerr then or President Sproul [who] said, "We've got to find a bigger place. They're going to tear down Wheeler Hall to get into that place." So we had to cancel a gymnastics meet and put the lecture in Harmon

- Wilson: Gymnasium. It was full and Kinsey gave a lecture that nobody will forget because he traced the history of every form of sexual behavior, no matter how normal or abnormal it's considered to be. He traced its appearance in the animal kingdom and traced its history and appearance in all cultures.
- Riess: How thorough.
- Wilson: Absolutely thorough, and at the end he didn't have to draw any conclusion because the conclusion was so evident, namely, it's the ignorant or the fearful person who will label any form of human sexual behavior as abnormal. Kinsey's work was the beginning, I think, of the modern sexual revolution, so-called.
- Riess: Was the press intelligent about it? You say they were calm.
- Wilson: Oh, yes. They reported the lectures unsensationally and quite accurately. You couldn't help but be impressed by Kinsey himself and by his staff.

Prime Ministers, an Ex-Governor, and a Royal Couple

- Riess: The visit from Jawaharlal Nehru must have been quite an event [October 1949].
- Wilson: He appeared at a university meeting in the Greek Theater. It was crammed with at least ten thousand people and we had loud speakers on the slope outside and there were several hundred out there. He was an impressive figure and a very eloquent and moving speaker. His own followers, as I remember, seemed to consider him a demigod.
- Riess: Do you mean the Indian community here?
- Wilson: Oh, yes, and they salaamed or something when they met him or when he approached.
- Riess: But he was a political figure.
- Wilson: Sure, he was the prime minister of India at that time, but he was still looked upon with great admiration. I had little or no personal contact with him. I set up the meeting and shook hands with him and that's about all. I don't have any personal reminiscences of him.
- Riess: His daughter was traveling with him, wasn't she? Indira?

Wilson: I don't remember that.

Riess: I think I've seen pictures.

Wilson: She probably was. But the thing is, as a consequence of that visit, not many months thereafter the prime minister of Pakistan, Liaquat Ali Khan, came to Berkeley and also spoke at a university meeting. Now, at this time Dick Hafner and I were acting together, and we knew that his name didn't mean anything to the general public, nor to the student body, the way Nehru's name did. We tried to persuade Ali Khan's representatives that we should put his meeting in a smaller auditorium. They wouldn't hear of it. "If Prime Minister Nehru had spoken in the Greek Theater, the prime minister of Pakistan also had to speak in the Greek Theater." We warned them that there wouldn't be much of a crowd. But they believed their leader would attract a crowd. We did everything we could at the time to publicize it through all of the Pakistani groups and through the newspapers and so on, but even the newspapers weren't much interested in Ali Khan. Who's he?

He was driven to the backstage area of the theater. I had looked out at the audience and I was embarrassed! There was all of about five hundred people. It was not only a miserable crowd, it was an embarrassing crowd. I told President Sproul, "There is practically nobody out there." [sighs] It would be clearly evident to everyone that this man could not attract an audience and that the university couldn't create an audience to hear him. But Sproul went through it with great gusto, never a batting of the eye, and so did Prime Minister Ali Khan. All of us were sick at heart because it turned out to be so miserable.

When, a couple of years ago, the prime minister of India came, the one who was between the terms of Indira Ghandi--Desai--we saw to it that he was put in Zellerbach Auditorium. We saw to it that all of his followers were given personal invitations and he had a good crowd in Zellerbach Auditorium. But his name wasn't famous the way Nehru's name was famous.

Riess: That year you also had J.D. Zellerbach when he was chief of the ECA (Economic Cooperation Administration) in Italy, and Harold E. Stassen.

Wilson: I don't remember Zellerbach really, but I remember Harold Stassen.

Riess: Was he running for anything at that time?

Wilson: No, at that time he was president of the University of Pennsylvania. He was between campaigns to become president of something bigger. President Sproul sent me to San Francisco to pick him up with the

Wilson: limousine. I went into the lobby of the Palace Hotel and announced to his suite that I was there. A couple of his aides came down. The university limousine was parked at the side entrance and there was a liveried driver with it.

Pretty soon the great man appeared with an aide at his side, looking neither to the right or the left, sweeping through the lobby down the stairs and into the car without turning or saying "howdy-do" to me or anybody. I got in the back seat with him and an aide said, "Governor Stassen, this is Professor Wilson." [imitates haughty tone] "How do you do." He then wrapped himself in his own thoughts. Oh, I thought, what a poseur! [laughter]

We drove across the bridge and to the campus with me trying to make conversation and not succeeding very well. When he met with President Sproul he opened up somewhat with Sproul being hearty and dominating. Stassen spoke quite well at the university meeting. I don't remember everything Sproul said in his introduction except that Stassen wanted to be president of something. He had to be president of something, so he was temporarily president of the University of Pennsylvania, which drew a laugh.

Since then Stassen has steadily gone downhill, has he not, running for president over and over again with a diminished following? My recollection was of a man who was suffering from delusions of grandeur. He had been the young prodigy, and I guess the height of his success was being governor of Minnesota, and I guess he was a cabinet officer for a while, but nothing much since then.

Riess: It doesn't sound like he has the common touch in any case that we all like so much.

Wilson: He may have had it in the beginning.

Riess: King Paul of Greece, some royalty in November 1953.

Wilson: Oh, yes, King Paul and Queen Frederika of Greece. I have a photograph of myself leading them up the steps of University House. There was a royal luncheon for them. I, as protocol officer, had the privilege of leading them up, ringing the doorbell, and I expected Mr. Sproul to open the door. (Now, incidentally, we have refined that procedure. When we have a person of that status, we have the chief campus officer at the foot of the stairs, so when the car drives up he's right there and accompanies them up the steps. But we weren't doing that in the Sproul era.)

I rang the doorbell. Mrs. Sproul opened the door. I was surprised but said nothing, and she greeted them cordially and said, "Won't you come in and meet some of the guests," which they

Wilson: did. The King and Queen and Mrs. Sproul lined up and the guests formed a receiving line. In a couple of minutes, Mr. Sproul appeared.

When I had Mrs. Sproul alone I said, "Where was the president? What was he doing?" She said, "You got here a little earlier than expected. He was in the attic rehearsing his speech for this afternoon." [laughter] I said, "Attic?" "Yes, that's the only place he can go and not be heard all over the house with that penetrating voice of his." Well, the luncheon was delightful. Afterward there was a little rest period and then they were driven to the Greek Theater.

There was a great, full audience in the Greek Theater. King Paul spoke very well in English. He didn't have to have an interpreter, and the Berkeley audience, as usual, seems to have these innate manners; they know what to do, when to stand, applaud, and whatnot. So I have happy memories of that, and of chatting with them, but not as many direct memories as with the King and Queen of Denmark.

Riess: We will get to them in a bit.

United Nations Meetings and Commemorations##

Riess: Dag Hammarskjold was a hero too?

Wilson: Yes, he was, and as I recall we held that meeting in Dwinelle Plaza in the open air. [May 13, 1954]

Riess: Was that a popular idea because people could wander in?

Wilson: That's right and also it is less expensive to set up in Dwinelle Plaza and now we're getting to the era where, unless you have a King Paul or a Nehru, students don't like to walk to the Greek Theater. It's too far. But we used to set up the plaza with maybe three thousand chairs and lots of room on buildings and steps and so on around and it was a very nice setting there.

Hammarskjold was this sandy-haired guy who spoke beautiful English and was warm and informal, but commanded attention even in informal conversation because he seemed to have a wisdom and a dedication which came through. He was here not once but twice as I recall. He spoke at that university meeting as secretary general of the U.N., and then in 1955 we had the first commemorative meeting of the United Nations, the ten-year celebration.

Wilson: The U.N. returned to San Francisco where it had been formed in 1945. I was not here because I was with the United States Army someplace abroad. At the time, they had a great convocation in our Greek Theater and gave honorary degrees to six foreign ministers, Anthony Eden, Jan Christian Smuts (I guess he was the president of the Union of South Africa then), and others. (That was when Sproul offered an honorary degree to Gromyko and he didn't bother to answer his invitation.) But we gave honorary degrees, to the secretary of state of the United States, and so on. So the tradition had been established that the top U.N. people come over to Berkeley.

Ten years afterward they came back to San Francisco to have commemorative meetings, and we immediately invited them to come to Berkeley. That was the second time Dag Hammarskjold spoke; also Judge Green Heckworth, who was the presiding justice of the international court of arbitration, and [Eelco N.] van Kleffens, the president of the general assembly. All three were the speakers. They got honorary degrees if they didn't have one and, oh, it was a gorgeous affair.

It was a beautiful afternoon. The delegates--many of them--from the nations attending these ceremonial meetings agreed to come and sit on the stage. We decided that they couldn't all be introduced on the stage, but we decided that as they took the stage, one by one, as they arrived, and as the audience was gathering, we would announce them and have them escorted to a seat by a faculty member.

This was one of the operations I am most proud of because myself and my committee worked it out. We had a regular group of men from the Sixth Army who did the car business. A car would drive to the foot of the ramp of the Greek Theater and there would be a dispatcher there from the Army and an Army chauffeur to open the door, to help them get out of the car, and the Army driver would take the car to a designated area with a number which the dispatcher kept.

We had a faculty member in full regalia, cap and gown, to escort the delegate up to the stage. Then we had Professor Travis Bogard backstage with a list, and he had spent a lot of time getting the names and the pronunciations straight. Bogard would say, "Now, the delegate from Japan, Mr. So-and-So, escorted by Professor So-and-So." He would come up onto the stage and the audience would all see him and he would take a bow and sit down. It worked beautifully really and the audience was fascinated by knowing who was who.

PHOTO CAPTIONS

top: Convocation honoring the 10th anniversary of the signing of the United Nations Charter, Hearst Greek Theatre, Berkeley, June 25, 1955. At lectern: President Robert Gordon Sproul conferring the honorary LL.D. on Eelco N. van Kleffens, then-President of the General Assembly of the United Nations. To his right, seated, is Green H. Hackworth, then-President of the International Court of Justice. Next, standing, is Wilson. Then, seated, is Vice-President of the University, James Corley.

bottom: Charter Day, April 5, 1979, Hearst Greek Theatre, which honored the 400th Anniversary of Sir Francis Drake's Landing in California. From left: Garff Wilson, President David Saxon, Vice-Chancellor and University Marshal Ira Michael Heyman, Sir Francis Drake, Professor James Hart, Chancellor James Meyer of the Davis Campus, Beefeater, and Former Governor Pat Brown.



Riess: Were they in colorful outfits?

Wilson: No, they were in afternoon clothes.

Riess: But the faculty had on robes.

Wilson: The faculty had on robes because the convocation that was to follow was a formal academic convocation. The speakers were all in cap and gown and there was a faculty procession too to honor them in cap and gown.

Riess: Was there a lot of heavy security? You had the Sixth Army there anyway.

Wilson: Oh, yes, all of the security forces from all over the Bay Area were watching. Then at the end the pathway down to the cars was carefully roped off with spectators on each side. The dispatcher had a PA system and would announce: "The car for the delegate of the Union of South Africa," and the delegate would walk down and get into his car. Oh, it was a very nice operation. I'm always proud of the little extra touches we can invent to make it smooth, and I'm proud of all of the people who are willing to cooperate.

Well, while we're on the U.N.--

Riess: While we're at the Greek Theater, do you do anything to keep the skies clear overhead? [laughter] I don't mean the rain. I mean passing helicopters and so on.

Wilson: Oh, yes, we try to, but we're not always successful. We call the Federal Aviation Administration, and the dispatchers around, and say, "Now, we're having a very important meeting." I think the time when we were most successful was when President Kennedy was here. Anytime a president is here you get help. But other times, if it's not that impressive, we are liable to have interference from aircraft overhead. We can keep trucks away because we control and patrol Gayley Road and can divert traffic so it doesn't go past the Greek Theater.

While we're on the United Nations, 1965 was the 20th anniversary of the foundation and we had another meeting. This time we were happy to share the meeting with all of the Bay Area colleges and universities and the United Nations Association of the Bay Area.

When we knew that commemorative meetings were going to be held again in San Francisco I went to see the general chairman of the event, who turned out to be Mr. Mortimer Fleishhacker. Because there had been a football player [of that name] in my era who had gone to Stanford, I mistakenly assumed that Mortimer Fleishhacker, Jr. was a Stanford man.

Wilson: In the course of our conversation I mentioned that our idea was to invite all colleges and universities to participate: "For example, we'd be delighted to have Stanford participate, and I'm sure you being a Stanford man would appreciate that." He said, "I beg your pardon! I am not a Stanford man. I am a California man!"

Riess: [laughter] I can't believe you did that.

Wilson: Yes, I did.

The United Nations in 1965 was more popular than the United Nations is in 1980. Anyway, there had been so many people interested in it that we thought we'd cooperate and have three hosts--the University of California, the other Bay Area colleges and universities, and the United Nations Association of the Bay Area. This worked out very well, but this time I've forgotten who were the speakers at this time, and I've forgotten whether we had this elaborate system of announcing the delegates or not.

Riess: It did take place on stage?

Wilson: Oh, yes, it took place on a beautiful, sunny afternoon, and to make it an all-community affair, we had the Boys' Chorus of San Francisco singing the United Nations hymn and some other hymn. Madi Bacon was the director and she had told me ahead of time that the Boys' Chorus had a little citation for Adlai Stevenson, who was the United States ambassador to the United Nations at the time. This was in '65. It was a Democratic administration. U Thant was the secretary general. Am I getting it mixed up because they were both speakers at a Charter Day?

Riess: They were both speakers at Charter Day, April 2, 1964.

Wilson: And this United Nations commemoration was on June 26, 1965.
[looking at program]

Riess: After school was out then.

Wilson: Yes, but we had a huge crowd.

We didn't bill ourselves separately, I see. We said, "The universities and colleges of the San Francisco Bay Area and the East Bay Committee for the United Nations' 20th anniversary present a convocation honoring the United Nations on the 20th anniversary of the signing of the United Nations charter and the celebration of the international year of cooperation."

Wilson: We had an academic procession: representatives of the East Bay communities and the East Bay Committee for the United Nations Anniversary, the faculties of the participating colleges and universities, then the official party. Dr. Clark Kerr, president of the university, presided. There was the national anthem. There was a moment of dedication. There were then greetings from Dr. C. Easton Rothwell, who represented the sponsoring universities and colleges, and from Judge C. Stanley Wood, the chairman of the East Bay Committee for the United Nations Anniversary. [pause] Oh, then I was wrong.

Riess: How is that?

Wilson: The choral selection by the San Francisco Boys' Chorus led by Madi Bacon was "The Divine Ship," words by Walt Whitman and music by her brother, Ernst Bacon. Then there was an address by his excellency, General Carlos Romulo, formerly president of the general assembly. There were remarks by his excellency, Dr. U Thant, secretary general. Then there was an address by his excellency, Mr. Alex Quaison-Sackey, president of the general assembly of the United Nations. Then there was conferring of honorary degrees, and so on.

I know our delegate, Adlai Stevenson, was there. Madi Bacon had said that the boys wanted to give him this citation. They had sung for him before and thought he was such a delightful man and indeed he was. "Is there any way I can tell him?" I said, "Yes, I think I'll see him before the convocation starts and I'll tell him you're down in the dressing room and you're waiting for him."

Sure enough, he arrived quite early and I said, "Ambassador Stevenson, the Boys' Chorus is going to sing for you today and they're downstairs and would love to say hello to you before you go on." "Oh, I'm delighted! Oh, I remember them so well." He was the warm, friendly kind and went right down the stairs and stayed about ten minutes. They crowded around him and he was exuding pleasure at their remembering him. So he was there, but he didn't speak on that occasion.

I now can correct what I said about 1955 [looking at program]. There were three speeches. Dag Hammarskjold was one. Eelco van Kleffens spoke also. He was president of the general assembly and he was from the Netherlands. And the president of the international court of justice and arms arbitration was Green H. Heckworth. They were the speakers and they got the honorary degrees.

Wilson: To fill in 1945, that first convocation honoring the United Nations was May 4, 1945, and the men who received honorary degrees and delivered addresses, all of them, I guess, were T.V. Soong, minister for foreign affairs from China; Georges Bidault, minister for foreign affairs from France; and then the minister of foreign affairs from Mexico: his last name was Padilla, but his first name is Ezequiel. [spells name] E-zebra-easy-quite-united-Iceland-easy-Louisiana; E-z-e-q-u-i-e-l.

Jan Christian Smuts was the prime minister of the Union of South Africa, not president. Anthony Eden, secretary of state for foreign affairs, United Kingdom. Here's a name that has been forgotten: Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., secretary of state of the United States of America. That takes care of the United Nations convocations.

Riess: The audience was still the good audience in 1965?

Wilson: Oh, in 1965 there was no demonstration that I recall, no heckling. It was a clear, beautiful day and everything worked beautifully. [looks through files]

Riess: You're enjoying your files!

Wilson: I'm enjoying the memories.

I worked on that program in 1955 with Andrew Cordier, who became president of Columbia University. Can you believe that? He used to sit up next to the presiding officer at U.N. meetings and was the man who told the presiding officer what to do and when.

Riess: Do you mean he was on the staff here at that time?

Wilson: No, no, he was on the staff of Dag Hammarskjold.

Riess: He was your opposite number.

Wilson: Yes, very much so.

I want confirmation of the system for the delegates' cars, the history of that. Oh, here it is, in my own handwriting. "Cordier: tell him delegates' cars will be marked. Call him next week to see if the seating arrangements are all right. Paging system for cars will be set up. Speakers will provide own cars to Mrs. Bell's luncheon. Consuls should not be invited to the luncheon. Hammarskjold, cap and gown." [laughter] That's the only thing I can find.

Riess: Your job is so full of details. Once you've committed that to the pink piece of paper, what happens to the pink piece of paper?

Wilson: Well, it's still here.

Riess: I know. That means that you followed through on all of this, instead of handing the paper to someone else?

Wilson: That's right, that's right. Any big successful function, or small successful function, depends on a sound, overall plan and after that, infinite attention to detail.

More Important Visitors

Mohammed V, King of Morocco

Riess: And all of that attention was applied to King Mohammed V?
[December 1957]

Wilson: Oh, yes, the King of Morocco. Well, I also have vivid memories of that because it illustrated what I always used to say, that we had an intuitively perceptive and polite audience of students and faculty and townspeople. Here we had an Arab monarch dressed in Arab dress and so on. He toured the campus first and had a luncheon at University House with Mrs. Sproul and President Sproul.

I was sitting in the entrance hallway on that occasion, not at the table, and I noticed him saying something to Mrs. Sproul. He was an absolute monarch at the time. She nodded and got up with him and they left the dining room, and the security men, who were talking among themselves, didn't see them go upstairs together. I did. I didn't say anything. Then one of them turned to look over in the dining room and no king, no monarch. Well, alarm! I said, "Be calm, no trouble. He's gone upstairs with Mrs. Sproul." "To do what?" I said, "Well, one never inquires about that."
[laughter]

Later Mrs. Sproul told us he decided he was feeling tired. He wanted to rest. "And then," he said, "I would like a hot water bottle in the car for my feet." He was wearing light slippers. Mrs. Sproul came down and said, "We don't have a hot water bottle in the house. We must find one." We called the athletic training quarters and sure enough Jack Williamson, who was the head trainer,

Wilson: said they had a hot water bottle. I said, "Fill it with hot water and get it over fast because the King of Morocco wants it," which he did!

I've forgotten what was the hour of the university meeting, whether it was before the luncheon or after the luncheon. But I was never more proud of our audience than I was on that occasion because his representative had said, "We can't enforce this, but in his own country nobody sits without the king's permission. They all remain standing until he gives that permission." I said, "There's no way to warn the audience of seven thousand University of California people that they've got to keep standing until the king gives them permission to sit."

I needn't have worried. It was magical. The meeting was held in Harmon Gym. The king went onto the platform escorted by President Sproul. The audience rose and applauded and applauded and applauded. The king stepped forward and bowed a couple of times. Then he stepped back and President Sproul and the king sat down. I fully expected the audience to sit down. They stood and they applauded. I was watching the king. His face took on this expression of pleasure and surprise. He got up and walked to the front of the stage and gave them the sign to sit down, which they did. Now, how they ever got the notion that this was the thing to do, I will never know.

The king didn't speak English. He spoke in Arabic and Professor George Lenczowski translated for him. The audience was fascinated by what he had to say. I don't remember a thing of what he had to say! [laughter] I just remember he was a gracious man and he gave the impression of always having his way. If any whim struck him-- "I'm tired of eating now, I want to lie down"--he doesn't observe protocol. I guess that is their protocol. He goes and lies down. "I want a hot water bottle"--he has it.

Riess: Where was he seated at the table? With Mrs. Sproul?

Wilson: Yes, they were seated on the long side of the table and I guess he was between President and Mrs. Sproul. They didn't try to have the president at one end and Mrs. Sproul at the other. They had a different arrangement. He was seated between them so he was surrounded by them. Well, that was a meeting, as you gather, that I remember well. One more?

Edward Teller

- Riess: Well, that year we had Edward Teller. [April 11, 1957]
- Wilson: That must have been right after the Russian takeover of Hungary.
- Riess: That's right, yes.
- Wilson: We had the meeting in Dwinelle Plaza then with Teller, who was Hungarian-born, to speak and to rally sentiment for Hungary. I think we also had a young Hungarian who had been a student here for a year or two. I remember a tall blond boy who spoke with Teller.

Teller is a spellbinder as a speaker and he was then. He is extremely articulate. His accent adds to his interest as a speaker. He is exceedingly forthright and doesn't mince words but says things that often startle his audience. I'm not sure how much he talked about Hungary, but I think he was making one of his speeches of prognostication for the 20th century because I remember him on that occasion predicting that we would colonize some of the planets or artificial satellites because of the overpopulation on planet Earth and he was absolutely convinced that this is a step that would be taken. How that related to Hungary, I don't know, unless it was from the present state of the world and what it's going to be a hundred [years] or some time from now.

- Riess: So it wasn't a political speech then?
- Wilson: No, it was a mixture of things, but my memory except for some details is vague. I do remember he was a fine speaker and he was a man of words, well, very direct.

In one of these series--was it for the Alumni Day?--one of these series of lectures we've had for various occasions, I called and asked him if he would deliver one of the lectures and he said, "What is the occasion?" I said, "This is the centennial celebration of the university. We want very distinguished faculty members and alumni." [in firm, formal voice] "Very good. Tell me the date." I told him the date. "What hour?" I told him the hour. I said, "You can speak on any subject you think will be of interest to the audience in your field."

"Very good. My subject will be 'After the Moon, What?'" It was all settled, bang, bang, bang, in about two or three minutes without saying, "I shall think about it, give me a little time, I'll let you know," and that sort of thing. He was as forthright as he could be. I was very much impressed with him.

Riess: How about that accent? Did he ever do anything to try and get rid of it, or did he maximize it, would you say?

Wilson: I think it had become so normal he wasn't aware of it anymore, and I notice that various people, they've been around so long, I don't think they're conscious that they've still got an accent, and as long as they're perfectly intelligible, there is no reason why they should. It adds a little piquancy. Is that the right word?

Riess: How was he received? Was he as controversial as he became later?

Wilson: No. Now, as I said, the relationship between the Hungarian situation--I know he had been very active and very important in organizing support for refugees from Hungary and finding homes for them to stay in, at least temporarily or permanently, and raising money to get them to the United States and so on. The connection between that activity and the university meeting and the subject matter I remember is vague in my mind. I think because of the Hungarian situation he was invited to speak, but he made his talk on a broad subject. That may have been it.

Eleanor Roosevelt

Riess: Then Eleanor Roosevelt came in 1958. [February 7, 1958]

Wilson: Oh, I certainly remember her because we had an evening university meeting to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the founding of the co-ops. She was their ideal speaker.

I had heard her speak once before back at Cornell University. In the winter time, in February, Cornell has a weekend they call "Farm and Home Week"--because the New York College of Agriculture is located at Cornell. They have all kinds of exhibits and programs for farmers and homemakers and so on, and it had become traditional to have Mrs. Roosevelt speak during that week. When her husband, FDR, was governor of New York, she started it and she continued it.

This one Farm and Home Week program was completely snowed in by a blizzard. All the highways were blocked going into Ithaca. The only car that got through from Syracuse, New York, to Ithaca was Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt's. She had a snowplow precede her and I'm told she sat placidly in the back seat knitting the whole time and dictating to her secretary. It didn't bother her. She got there on time.

Wilson: She delivered her speech and that was the speech when she was so chatty about royalty, and where she gave the remark that I have quoted many, many times. She was talking about Queen Elizabeth. (Elizabeth was the queen consort of George VI, wasn't she? The parents of the present queen?)

Riess: Yes, that's right.

Wilson: It must have been Queen Elizabeth. She and Mrs. Roosevelt had a funny little incident in which the king, and the President of the United States, drove off leaving them on the curb. [laughter] The queen said to Mrs. Roosevelt, "Shouldn't we get in the next car?" Mrs. Roosevelt said, "By all means." The queen said, "I'm accustomed to being forgotten," and Mrs. Roosevelt said, "So am I! We must fend for ourselves." [laughter]

She said another thing she learned from Queen Elizabeth was the first and the second rules of royalty, two rules which royalty cannot fail to observe or they won't survive: never stand when you have a chance to sit, and never miss a chance to go to the bathroom. [laughter]

I only listened to Mrs. Roosevelt back at that time, but here she came onto the campus. There was a dinner at Alumni House in her honor before the evening meeting. I was in the little reception committee when her car drove up, and we shook hands with her and escorted her into the Alumni House lounge. I noticed Mrs. Roosevelt glance around, and seeing Mrs. Sproul, Sr., President Sproul's mother, the oldest woman in the room, she went right to her and greeted her. I was told later that this is the old-fashioned etiquette, to greet the oldest person. I've never seen it observed. The other people arose and she walked around and met them all.

After the dinner was over they walked across to the gymnasium, and she got a tremendous ovation. She again talked about public affairs and the growth of the cooperative movement, how the Berkeley campus had been a pioneer in cooperative housing for students, and a great many other things.

She was perfectly charming, but she started to cough and swallow. I was sitting next to her secretary in the front audience and the secretary said, "Is there water on the lectern?" I said, "Yes, but it's down on the lower shelf. It's not on the platform." She said, "She needs some water. She hasn't seen it." I said, "How are we going to get it?"

Well, it got worse. It was one of the most embarrassing moments, and a moment when I had to say to myself, "You're the Chinese stage-hand. You're invisible. Nobody's going to see you." I tippy-toed

Wilson: onto the stage and reached under and put the water in the glass up on the lectern itself where she could see it, and tippy-toed off. [laughter]

Another example. I said to the secretary, "She's flown in today. She must be very tired." Her secretary said, "Oh, she's got marvelous energy." I said, "Is she going to stay overnight?" "Oh, no, she has an evening plane. She has a speech to give tomorrow at noon." I said, "Goodness, I hope she'll sleep on the plane." "No, she'll write thank you notes. Then she may rest a little bit."

Well, I escorted her to her car, and then another vehicle drove up to take her to San Francisco. She was about to get in that. Then she stopped, walked over to the driver of the university car, and shook hands and thanked him, and went back and got into her car after shaking hands with all of us who had been on the reception committee and, by gum, two days later I get a personal note from Eleanor Roosevelt thanking me for what I did.

Riess: It's very impressive.

Wilson: It is impressive that a woman of her position and of her multitude of activities never forgot a courtesy. She was phenomenal, I thought. She had a beauty which shone through. Without the personality, without the graciousness, she wasn't a beautiful woman. But with her animation, and with her energy and with her kindness and her wisdom--I guess the perfect tribute after she died was the one spoken by Adlai Stevenson when he said (something like this), "She would rather light a candle than rail against the darkness."

Well, now I have to end for the day.

King Frederick and Queen Ingrid of Denmark##

[Interview 16: July 15, 1980]

Riess: The King and Queen of Denmark must have been a memorable royal visit.

Wilson: That was one of the happiest royal visits we have ever had. Everything went right, and we were able to add those extra touches which I call "the Berkeley touches." The stars were worthy of them because they filled an American's idea of what a king and a queen should be, how they should look, how they should act.

Wilson: They were going to be received at Alumni House for a little coffee reception with a few invited guests, and then be taken on a campus tour of things they had expressed a desire to see. Then lunch at University House and then a university meeting in Harmon Gym at which the king was to speak. That was the program.

We had decided that the queen should have a royal bouquet of long-stemmed red roses. We picked one of our prettiest coeds to present it to the queen. While we were waiting in Alumni House, the police walkie-talkies informed us that when the royal party had passed the West Gate it had stopped. There had been a group of students there and they had given the queen a bouquet of flowers. I thought, "Oh, dear." I told the girl, "If she comes in with a bouquet of flowers, we'll have to cancel that little item." But the queen did us the honor of expecting an official bouquet. So when she stepped out of the car, she had already handed the first bouquet to the lady-in-waiting and was ready to receive the official bouquet.

One little sidelight. President Kerr was supposed to be the host, but he was in the hospital in UCLA, and Vice-President Harry Wellman had to be the host. Now, Wellman is a wonderfully able, wise person, but he cannot make conversation with strangers very easily. He didn't at the time. I found that I had to make most of the conversation. [laughter]

Anyway, we took the royal party to Hertz Hall because the king was interested in music. The king was an amateur orchestra conductor. As the car drove up, we had a brass choir on the little balcony of Hertz Hall giving a royal flourish as they stepped out. Then we took them up the stairs to look at the concert hall from the upper level, and as they appeared on the upper level, the university organist started playing the Danish national anthem and some stirring chords and it was very, very successful. I've forgotten where else we took them on the campus. We had lunch at University House.

I remember the university meeting because our audience again immediately rose to their feet as the royal party entered and our band and our Glee Club did itself proud. The Glee Club under Bob Commanday, now the senior music critic for the San Francisco Chronicle, had learned three sea chanteys in Danish, and as part of the program they rose and sang the three chanteys. (The king is also a sailor.) Then our band had in 1958 played in Denmark on the 4th of July. They had been on a European tour and had played at the World's Fair in Brussels and then gone up and played at the annual big celebration of the American Independence Day there in Denmark. When they were there they had learned the Danish national anthem and so at the end of that university meeting the band stood and played both national anthems, and the king and queen beamed.

Wilson: I noticed that the queen before she left the stage turned to her right to the section of the bleachers where the Glee Club was sitting and as a little gesture of appreciation she clasped her hands together, gave the congratulatory gesture, and bowed to them. It was charming to think that she would do that. The kids beamed and beamed. As I say, everything went right and they were royal and gracious and it was a memorable occasion.

I had one of my memorable put downs then. My first name, Garff, comes from my Danish grandfather, who was born in Copenhagen, I guess, and whose name was Christian Garff. The family always told me it was a fairly common name in Denmark. So when I was walking with the king and the queen and Vice-President Wellman and trying to make conversation, I said, "You know, your majesty, my first name is supposed to be a common name in Denmark." "What is it?" said the king. "My first name," I said, "is Garff; G-a-r-f-f." A pause. "Never heard of it, never heard of it," said the king. That demolished my idea that it was a common name! I then said my grandfather's full name was Christian Garff. "Oh, Christian, yes, yes. Everybody knows Christian, but not Garff."

Riess: Who was so honored to be invited to that coffee?

Wilson: Oh, select students from International House, some members of the Scandinavian department, any special friends in the area, other administrative people who are good at that sort of thing. Always the question is, who would be logical, who would fit in, who deserves and belongs in a group like that? Certain top administrative people, vice-chancellors, and provosts are always invited, and sometimes they choose to come and sometimes they don't.

Royal Briefings

Wilson: I don't know whether I mentioned that when the Crown Prince of Belgium was here in April [1980], he had asked to meet with some experts on international political economy, and we had an hour session in which he asked questions and three of our top people in international economics talked to him.

The Greek ambassador whom we had just a couple of weeks ago also wanted to talk to people who were experts in Middle Eastern affairs and all that sort of thing. Certainly, if there is an opportunity, we do that.

Riess: That's done willingly by the people asked?

Wilson: Oh, yes, they always seem to be flattered and pleased to be asked. When the Prince of Wales, Prince Charles, was here he had asked to be briefed on atomic energy and the problems involved with using it to displace fossil fuels. We, of course, had some of the top experts in the world, Glenn Seaborg and several from Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory, and they gave him a beautiful briefing on both the problems and the prospects.

And I don't know whether we mentioned before Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands. He wasn't a speaker, but we received him at a reception at Alumni House, and remembering the King and Queen of Denmark reminds me of Bernhard and what a fascinating impression he made. He had come because he wanted to visit the laboratory on the hill, the Rad Lab we called it then, and to meet E.O. Lawrence, who was alive then. We planned a little reception for him at the Alumni House. His photographs gave the impression of a rather stolid, stocky German prince, and from that I thought he had a personality that must be stolid and stuffy. He was exactly the opposite.

When the car pulled up--I've forgotten when this was, but President Sproul was there to greet him--outside of Alumni House, I opened the rear door expecting the prince to be in the back of the limousine. The front door opened and out hopped a slim, energetic young man who went up to President Sproul and said, "I'm Bernhard." I was helping the ambassador out! [laughter] Well, he [Bernhard] was anything but stuffy and stodgy. He was very lively and personable.

He and E.O. Lawrence got along beautifully together. That visit I made one of the poorest minor decisions of my life. E.O. Lawrence had a new convertible Cadillac roadster. I was standing close to him and the prince when he said to the prince, "I have a new convertible car. Wouldn't it be more fun to drive up to the laboratory in my open car than in your closed limousine?" The prince said, "Oh, much more! That would be great."

Then E.O. turned to me and said, "Garff, won't you join us?" I said, "Oh, I'd love to, E.O. But I have a class." [laughter] I was so conscientious in those years I said, "I can't miss a class." So I rejected what I'm sure would have been a memorable experience, to drive with E.O. Lawrence, the great physicist, and the Prince of the Netherlands, in a new car up to the laboratory--just to go to a stuffy class! Oh, I've regretted that ever since!

Riess: Lawrence was called E.O.?

Wilson: Yes. I knew him fairly well and I called him E.O. But I think other people called him Ernest.

Political Visitors; Robert Kennedy.

Riess: Interesting. Hubert Humphrey was here in 1961.

Wilson: Yes, my memory of Hubert Humphrey was of a bundle of energy. He gave off sparks in all directions; not only lively, but radiating goodwill too. It was kind of a political meeting. I don't know whether it was a regular university meeting.

Riess: It was on December 11, 1961.

Wilson: Yes, I think it was a political gathering.

Riess: On campus?

Wilson: Yes, an on-campus political thing. All I remember about it was his boundless energy and goodwill, and he made a rousing speech that everybody enjoyed and chuckled over. I will always remember one of his opening remarks. He said, "People who don't know me sometimes ask what is my political affiliation, but I always reply like Will Rogers, 'I belong to no organized political party; I am a Democrat.'" [laughter]

Riess: That's lovely. Was he attended by Clark Kerr?

Wilson: No, I think this was kind of an unofficial meeting. I have forgotten who introduced him and how it was. If my memory is correct it may have been the ASUC who sponsored this and they didn't want to pay to have the big stage put up and have all of those chairs moved into the gym. They had the bleachers moved out and they had the audience sit on the floor and he spoke from the floor with a microphone, with a stand mike there. So it must have been not a regular university meeting but an ASUC-sponsored affair.

The ASUC used to do that now and then. There was one series in the late sixties on the civil rights movement sponsored by the ASUC during the tenure of Dick Beahrs as ASUC president. I know that series included the attorney general of the United States, who was then Ramsey Clark, and the late Robert Kennedy and several other of the top leaders in the civil rights movement.

Riess: Did these meetings go smoothly or was there a lot of heckling and rabble rousing?

Wilson: That was before the Free Speech Movement had started and audiences were polite and attentive then because I remember the meetings on civil rights were bubbling with enthusiasm. But these were all popular liberals who spoke in that series and [they] were saying

Wilson: the things that the audience wanted to hear mostly. I don't remember any disruptions. The Robert Kennedy meeting was a strange experience. He had, as his staff, his advance agents, some very bright, very energetic, very tough young men who were accustomed to get whatever they wanted to get.

I was advising Dick Beahrs in the ASUC on this, helping them with it unofficially. (The president [Kerr] had asked me to do that because of the eminence of the speakers they had lined up.) So I met with the Kennedy advance party and we proposed that the meeting be in the Greek Theater because only the Greek Theater would hold the crowd. They had written back and said, no, they wanted a closed auditorium or enclosed place. We discovered they thought they could control the crowd better and make a better impression.

Riess: A better impression with whom?

Wilson: Somehow they thought they could stage it in an enclosed place in such a way as to present their man in a better light.

I took them down to Harmon and I showed them Harmon and showed them pictures. (We always have pictures of our old Charter Days and so on.) I said, "Here's the picture of what it looks like when it's full, and here are pictures of the Greek Theater when it's full." Then I took them over to the Greek Theater and they decided that I was right and that they would hold it in the Greek Theater. We assured them that we had had vast experience in handling crowds and that we didn't anticipate, and the police didn't anticipate, any trouble because Robert Kennedy then was a hero. Boy, I've never seen such an outpouring of enthusiasm for a man!

But they were a very tough group to work with. They absolutely demanded to do things their way. We carefully set it up so Kennedy's car could be driven up through the Bowles Hall parking lot and stop at the stage level and [he could] walk onto the stage there. At the last minute they reversed that because they saw that the street was lined with people all waiting to see him, and the slope leading from the Greek Theater down to Gayley Road was lined with people. So they changed it, had him get out there and walk through the crowd, the crowd applauding and cheering him and so on.

The worst thing was they upset all the stage arrangements. Our band was on the stage and the number of people (mostly young people and students) who wanted to be there was, I think, the greatest that I've ever seen. People were hanging in the trees, they were in every aisle, and they were on every inch of the stage; we let them come up and sit down on the stage. He kept that audience waiting an hour and a half.

Riess: Do you mean he just didn't progress--

Wilson: No, he was just an hour and a half late. I had forgotten to say that the meeting was called to start at 1:30 and it didn't start until three. That's the relative time. The Cal Band was heroic because they played their whole repertory of songs, everything they knew, and then they went back and played it again two or three times. Then various instrumentalists played to keep the crowd happy. The crowd, though, was immensely good-natured because they had come there to see and to worship Robert Kennedy.

Well, when he arrived it was staged so all of the cameras and the TV's watched him plow his way through this adoring crowd, come onto the stage, ignoring myself and the faculty committee that was to welcome him. I think he met the student body president, that's all. Finally, when he was in, when the thing was started, I left. I was fed up and quite disgusted with the way it had been done without any consideration for the university. The whole thing turned out to be just a great rally for Robert Kennedy.

Riess: The manners of his staff people were his manners?

Wilson: That's right, that's right. But the crowd didn't sense any of this. They hadn't been in on the planning of it or been man-handled by his own staff. Their enthusiasm, the outpouring of admiration, was just tremendous.

So the ASUC every now and then used to have meetings and sponsor speakers. I don't remember any in recent years.

Riess: Earlier in 1961 Lewis Mumford came, a man who I think is an interesting personality.

Wilson: Yes, I remember what a stimulating, scholarly kind of speech it was. As I recall, this was given in Dwinelle Plaza and attracted a good, big audience and it was a bright, clear, sunny day. The people who knew his name and came to hear him were vastly interested in what he had to say, but I don't recall the theme of his talk or exactly what he said.

Riess: In 1962 you had a mixed bag--Nixon, George Stewart, and Aldous Huxley. But Nixon!

Wilson: He was never here under the auspices of the Committee on Public Ceremonies or the university. If he was here, it was under the auspices of the ASUC.

Riess: I'm getting these from that list of university meetings.

Wilson: As I may have remarked before, I was one of the original people disillusioned with Nixon and his campaign against Jerry Voorhis, so I would not have attended the meeting. I would have allowed myself the privilege of having nothing to do with it. So I don't remember that at all.

George Stewart, I've known him ever since I was a graduate student in English and he was a professor of mine, but I don't remember him at a university meeting.

Riess: I know you talked about Huxley earlier.

Wilson: Yes, when we invited him to speak at the Phi Beta Kappa initiation at the time his son, Matthew, was made a member. But I guess again he was a guest of the ASUC because I do remember meeting him outside of Pauley Ballroom and reminding him that I had written him a letter when his son graduated, and he pretended to remember that, a fragile man, thin, grey-haired, and almost transparent it seemed. But I don't remember his speech. I don't remember what he was here for. Sorry.

Riess: Then Paul Tillich. And the Tilden Meditation Room.

Wilson: Yes, Tillich was, I think, a university meeting speaker [February 1963]. But again, my memory holds nothing that's very marked or distinct. I don't remember anything. But the dedication of the Tilden Meditation Room, what was the date on that?

Riess: That was June 1963.

Wilson: The Tilden family had asked President Sproul to be on the program to read "Abou Ben Adhem, may his tribe increase."

Riess: Was he known for that?

Wilson: No, but he was known for having this carrying, resonant, baritone voice, and he was a friend of the Tilden family, and so he did. The stained glass window that had been commissioned for the room and made in France shows Abou Ben Adhem and the angel writing in the book of gold, and so they wanted that on the program, and President Sproul recited it in ringing tones.

The Dalai Lama

- Riess: In your list of major activities of the Committee on Public Ceremonies [appended] you talk about planning and staging entertainment for distinguished visitors such as the Dalai Lama, the Prince of Wales, the prime minister of Pakistan, ambassadors, members of the Royal College of Defense Studies. But the Dalai Lama?
- Wilson: Yes, that was within the past year, very recent. There is an office of Tibet in New York City--although according to the People's Republic of China there is no such thing as Tibet anymore--but the office of Tibet corresponded with us and said that the Dalai Lama was going to be in the area and he would like to visit the university, and were we interested? We wrote back and said of course we were. Eventually they sent this young, handsome Tibetan gentleman out here to look over the ground and make the arrangements. He was a delightful and engaging person. We arranged a whole program, a whole day. We thought it prudent to invite the Graduate Theological Union to co-sponsor this visit with us. Chancellor Bowker and the dean and president, Claude Welch, were very good friends and we had worked together on a number of things.
- Riess: What is the subtlety there?
- Wilson: The Dalai Lama wanted to visit the Graduate Theological Union and he wanted to have a colloquium with some theologians. His representative thought it would be better to have that up there. It seemed appropriate in view of the fact that when Pope Shenouda III, the head of the Coptic Church, was here, we had invited Dean Welch to be co-sponsor, and it worked out very well. Since the Dalai Lama was interested in visiting there, we decided to have them as co-sponsors.

The first idea was to hold this colloquium between theologians and the Dalai Lama up there. But then Dean Welch pointed out that their largest auditorium would hold only seventy-five or eighty and that a great many more people would want to listen to the Dalai Lama. So we suggested that it be held in the Lipman Room of Barrows Hall, which could hold 250, and that's where it was held.

We worked it out very amicably. He stopped at the Pacific School of Religion first and was greeted there. Dean Welch who was also president of the school, drove with him down to the steps of the library where he was received by Chancellor Bowker and the university administration. Then we walked in to look at some Tibetan scrolls and manuscripts which the library had put in those cases in the

Wilson: lobby. When we walked out we had the Tibetan national anthem played on the Campanile bells. He was driven around various spots on the campus before he went to lunch at the University House. After lunch the chancellor made a few welcoming remarks and the Dalai Lama, whose English was fairly shaky, replied in English. I guess we gave him some token gifts like a bronze paperweight with the university seal on it and so on. The big event was this meeting for an invited audience in the Lipman Room.

Now, all of the Buddhist factions around the campus were very anxious to be invited and some of them were, but the pressure was taken off of us because there was a public meeting the next day in the Oakland Civic Auditorium. When we couldn't accommodate a person in the Lipman Room we said, "The Dalai Lama, his holiness, will speak at the Oakland Civic Auditorium and everybody is welcome to go at the price of \$5 per head." We had very carefully selected all of the people who should be there and deserved to be there and the Graduate Theological Union had also sent their lists. We had Dean Welch preside and introduce the Dalai Lama.

Riess: Was he on a tour to raise money for his country or to raise sympathy? What was the purpose of \$5 a head?

Wilson: That was to pay his expenses. There was no fund raising whatever connected with his trip to the campus. It was to expose himself, let people see him and hear him, and for him to inspire the Buddhists who I think are very strong in this area, and to create some sympathy for his exile and his own state of being. He was an exceedingly--what's the right word?--he was very anxious to please and was smiling and bowing all of the time. I mentioned Pope Shenouda III, who was a man of great dignity. He wore his robes (as did the Dalai Lama), but he carried a gold cross in his hands the whole time. One was never unaware of his holiness, Pope Shenouda III. The Dalai Lama was given to bobbing and grinning and sticking out his hand to anybody because he was very anxious to please and be liked.

The program in Barrows Hall turned out to be really a long, fairly difficult speech by the Dalai Lama, most of it in Tibetan with his own interpreter, all on Buddhist doctrine and Buddhist concepts, and many people listened with great attention. Those were mostly the Buddhists. Others listened with mild interest--

Riess: Wondering what they were doing there!

Wilson: [laughter] Yes! But his own followers had brought various symbolic gifts to spread in front of the platform.

Riess: Saffron robes?

Wilson: Oh, yes. He had his own monks with him, his own Buddhist monks. It was hard to tell what their rank was because they were all democratically dressed in the same thing. [laughter] Pope Shenouda III had some of his apostles with him, and you could tell them by the difference in costume and colors they wore.

Riess: You said that the Dalai Lama had lunch at the University House?

Wilson: Yes. We said, "The Dalai Lama is coming. Would you like to have him for lunch, Mr. Bowker?" "Why not?" he would say. "I have not entertained a god for some time." [laughter]

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Riess: Were there any other notable religious leaders who visited?

Wilson: That rank with a pope and a Dalai Lama who is the reincarnation of the Buddha of mercy and this reincarnation is passed down from generation to generation? No.

When a Dalai Lama dies, the holy men of Tibet have to start consulting all of the oracles and the signs and the holy scriptures because they know that somewhere in Tibet has been born a child about the time he died who is his reincarnation. They have tests and they have ways of trying to locate him. The story of the current Dalai Lama is that one of the holy men had dreams of a small house next to a temple with green tiles. They searched the kingdom and found it and found a recently born baby in the house and they put him through various tests which I don't know well enough to repeat. The Buddhists are convinced that he is the Buddha of mercy and this continues down an unbroken line.

Riess: So his own personal heredity has nothing to do with it, or is that part of the test? They would certainly have to find the parents acceptable.

Wilson: One test they gave the infant: they offered him two objects which had been owned and used by the Dalai Lama, one the real object and the other a fake to look exactly like it, and the baby always chose the genuine object and shunned the counterfeit object. He showed precocious qualities right from the beginning. Of course, when the parents discover that through them is born the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama they are themselves practically beatified. He's taken away, of course, from the parents immediately and reared very carefully by the holy men and is trained in all the right things.

- Riess: That's interesting that you say that it didn't weigh very heavily on him.
- Wilson: No, it didn't. He was a very cordial man and actually "anxious to please" is the best description I can find of him.

The Polish Parliamentarians

- Riess: I think that the reason you chose the Dalai Lama and the others to list in a description of the activities of public ceremonies was because they represented a great spectrum of things. When you say the parliamentarians from Poland, what was that?
- Wilson: [laughter] Oh, that was a happy, small occasion. They wanted to visit the campus and all I remember about the visit was a reception for them at the Women's Faculty Club.

It was the number-two political leader from Poland with his colleagues, six altogether. A short time before their visit we had had the British ambassador, and with ambassadors we always have our own police escort posted at the gate, whatever gate they are going to use, to lead the official car to the greeting party. Well, the Poles were coming in the East Gate where several ambassadors had come in, and the police escort was expecting a long black limousine flying an official ambassador's flag or something like that, so he missed the party completely.

I was waiting out in front of the Women's Faculty Club with Chancellor Bowker, when down the drive came this green Plymouth with six people crammed in it. They saw us and they stopped. They all leaped out. This was the whole Polish delegation driving themselves, as happy as they could be! They were a very charming group. We took them in. We had a lot of Polish speaking people invited for this, a lot of people who were interested in that area, including, of course, Provost Maslach, who is Polish by descent.

Another strange thing. We had gone to great trouble to get some Polish vodka. We had been told officially that Polish vodka was quite different from Russian vodka. Many people considered it superior to Russian vodka. So we had Polish vodka. They turned up their noses at vodka of all kinds and drank scotch whiskey! [laughter]

Wilson: As I recall, we presented some kind of a token gift to the head man and he replied and gave the chancellor a token gift in return. My memory of that is a little misty. I only have the memory that they were a happy group and very congenial and outgoing, but preferred scotch whiskey to vodka!

Visitors from the People's Republic of China

Riess: You mention here a lunch with the visiting volleyball team from the People's Republic of China. Chancellor Bowker entertained?

Wilson: No, he was gone then. But he had said, "Yes, we must entertain them." (Chancellor Bowker is a very high ranked person in the People's Republic of China.)

Riess: Now why is that?

Wilson: He has done a lot to strengthen the scholarly relationships between the U.S.A. and the People's Republic. The first delegation we had from the People's Republic included the man who would now be the ambassador. He was then called the head liaison officer. Bowker jokingly says the reason he immediately got invited to the People's Republic of China was because we treated this delegation so well.

We had a coffee reception for them in the chancellor's conference room and we took them on a walking tour of the campus. This was one of the first times we had used our gimmick of playing a national anthem. Now, you have to be careful about playing the wrong national anthem of the People's Republic of China. But our then chimesmaster had carefully researched it and found that "The East Is Red" is the official national anthem. Well, the delegation led by Chancellor Bowker left California Hall, turned right, then started up Campanile Way. That's when the chimesmaster saw them and he immediately started to play. They stopped, the delegation, they looked at each other in wonder, and they all broke out in great grins and started to applaud the tower! [laughter]

The chancellor says, "That's the reason I got invited to be their guest." He's been back a couple of times. And almost every delegation to land comes to Berkeley and we repeat the warm welcome. So Bowker ranks very high and he likes the Chinese, too.

When the Chinese volleyball team was coming he wasn't going to be here, but he said to his assistant chancellor, Glenn Grant (Glenn is also an enthusiast for the People's Republic), "You be the host." It turned out to be such a big luncheon--they brought

Wilson: volleyball players, and then you have to duplicate all the volleyball players around here and all kinds of friends of volleyball players--that we gave it in one half of Pauley Ballroom. Glenn Grant was the host and it was a nice luncheon, well-served. We had a memento for all of the volleyball players, a little medallion of a bear's head. Fortunately, before they were distributed we noticed on the back a small sticker saying "made in Taiwan." [laughter] So we took each one out of its cellophane bag and removed the sticker!

We had the flag of the People's Republic back of the head table, and it was smaller than the American flag, but I discovered how to disguise this. If the flags are just on a staff hanging down, you drape the larger flag, that is, you pin it up in folds so it looks the same size as the other flag. That's what we did to make them both the same size. We have done that several times. On occasion, somebody has rushed to me, a member of my committee, to say, "Oh, the flags are a different size. What will we do?" I'll say, "Give me a safety pin and I'll show you what you do!" [laughter] If you have them outside in the wind, of course, you have to tie them together in a bunch so the wind won't blow them over.

Riess: Have the Chinese always asked for briefings when they've come?

Wilson: They very often have, yes, and very often the visitors, of course, are from a specific discipline. I remember having a delegation from the Chinese equivalent of our bureau of standards, weights, and measures; of course, we get our people who are statisticians to meet with them. If it's a group interested in physical sciences, why, then after the reception and luncheon and so on, they are parceled out to various individual professors or one or two professors to be shown the laboratories and the classrooms and the experimentation that's going on. We set up individual programs very often to suit their interests.

At one luncheon which was not at University House--it was at the Faculty Club--the chancellor could not be there, so he asked Dean Kuh, who was dean of our School of Engineering and a native-born Chinese, to be the host. Chinese was his first language. Of course, he's very fluent in English now. At the end of the luncheon he rose and made a very graceful little speech in English, welcoming the delegation. Then he switched to Mandarin and made the same speech in Mandarin.

I happened to be sitting by the official interpreter assigned by Washington to this delegation, and I said to him, "How is the dean's Chinese?" He said, "It's perfect. I don't know why they

Wilson: sent me on this particular visit. I'm not needed at all!" [laughter] Not only did we have Dean Kuh there, but we had three or four Chinese scientists who were also fluent in both languages and whenever we have a delegation we inevitably invite them to be present because they can switch back and forth.

We now have a standard little reception, coffee reception--also with bottled orange pop, which we discovered the Chinese love. We meet in the chancellor's conference room. On the table we have large tent-shaped place cards with the name of the person on both sides. For the first few delegations we had individual Chinese names laboriously put on the cards in Chinese script. Then we decided that was too much of a hassle each time, so now we have a regular set of tent cards in Chinese colors. The Chinese characters say "honorable guest." [laughter] We have Chancellor Bowker, honorable guest; Vice-Chancellor Heyman, honorable guest. We name the local people who are there, but all the Chinese have the same card.

We immediately, of course, ask the head of the delegation to sit at the right of the chancellor, and if there is a protocol person from the state department with the delegation we ask him to be sure the top-ranking people are seated in order around the table by their rank. We often ask for an advance list to see who is who and then assign a faculty person immediately to grab that person and put him at the right place at the table.

Behind the Scenes; the Berkeley Touches

Riess: You talk about the Berkeley touches and things you've mentioned today certainly are wonderful touches. Do you suppose people are surprised--visitors from other countries--that so large a university is so personal? Do you think Berkeley with its touches has upstaged Stanford?

Wilson: Yes, it has far upstaged Stanford. Example: back when Mayor John Lindsay of New York was our Charter Day speaker, I think I told you about the difference. The reputation we must have is indicated by the fact that the Prince of Wales, for example, didn't go to Stanford at all. The Crown Prince of Belgium didn't go to Stanford at all, though the princess went down there to open an art exhibit.

The most recent example is our visit from the Greek ambassador, John Tsounis, who twenty years ago was in the Greek consulate in San Francisco. He arrived on campus in the morning. We gave him a

Wilson: tour of the campus on foot. At 11 a.m. we met at University House because he wanted to discuss Middle Eastern affairs with some of our experts. Then we had a splendid luncheon at University House. What else did we do for him? Of course, we played the Greek national anthem for him on the bells and presented him, as we often do, with a copy of University of California: A Pictorial History. He had to leave the campus about 2:30 to go to Stanford.

Incidentally, the hour's discussion preceding lunch was held in the living room because there were just twenty-four people present. We thought it would be nice to have a little drink before luncheon, either fruit juice or California white wine, and we provided retsina white wine, and we provided ouzo. Those touches, having the Greek aperitif and so on, surprised the Greeks very much and half of them took the ouzo or the retsina.

The following Monday--this was on a Friday--I called Mrs. Calligas, who is the vice-consul in San Francisco, to thank her for all of the help she had given us. "Oh," she said, "we should thank you." I said, "How was your visit to Stanford?" (This was the real reason for my calling her. I wanted to know how the two visits compared.) She said, "Oh, it was all right. It was fairly good."

I said, "How did it compare to the Berkeley visit?" She said, "Compare? There is no comparison! The Berkeley visit was out of this world. It was superb, and the Stanford visit was ordinary. The ambassador after the Berkeley visit said, 'Well, they certainly know how to do things at Berkeley, don't they? I can understand why it has the prestige it has.'" That was the kind of response to make us proud on the Berkeley campus, trying to do things in a very special way.

Riess: That's interesting. On these lunches and dinners--what about the food?

Wilson: We always ask ahead of time if there are any food taboos or any food preferences. If there are, we carefully observe them. If there are not, we choose whatever we want. The luncheon which is the most recent in mind was that for the Crown Prince of Belgium and his princess. They had cold fresh salmon with fresh asparagus. It was excellent. Also we always try to find out if the guests drink wine or any alcohol because if not, then we don't serve it to anybody.

The difficult people are the visitors from India. When was it, three years ago, we had the then Prime Minister Desai? I asked our public affairs officer, Dick Hafner, to take charge of that

Wilson: because I have a certain prejudice against people from India, and it's unfair to have me run it; I might allow the prejudice to show. Dick Hafner has visited India and has none of this and so he was really the head man. But not only do the high-ranking Indians not drink any alcohol, they often have to have very special things. The prime minister had to have apple juice pressed--not from a bottle--but pressed from fresh apples, instantly done. He was also the man whom all the newspapers said had the extraordinary habit of drinking a cup of his own urine every day and to this he attributed his long life.

The reception at University House--I don't think they had a meal there--I think they had a reception because the house was full of Indians and Buddhists who were making the typical salaam and what-not. The prime minister was a very gracious, dignified, older man who went around and shook hands with everybody and said something nice to everybody. But their food taboos can create special problems.

After the reception, there was a big meeting for the prime minister in Zellerbach Auditorium at which he addressed the Indian community from the Bay Area. That was the visit.

Riess: These days does the chancellor's wife worry about the food?

Wilson: Lila Carmichael, the social secretary, worries about the food. Of course, she always consults with the first lady of the campus to be sure that they agree.

Riess: Is it brought in? I talked to Therese Heyman recently and she said she was discussing things with Narsai's, as if much might just be catered.

Wilson: Yes, sometimes it's catered, but during the past year they have had a very good staff in the kitchen which has put on quite a few of the luncheons and the smaller dinners. If it's going to be a dinner for from sixty to a hundred people, say, then they usually have it catered, and when they can afford it they have Narsai's. Narsai's is elegant, but Narsai's is also expensive and the chancellor has just a certain amount of money set aside for entertainment. When that's gone they have to do with what is left or appeal for additional funds. So it happens both ways. I think the house staff prepared the last luncheon for the Greek ambassador because there were twenty-four people and they could handle that many very nicely. I've forgotten what we had to eat, but it was good.

Riess: I was looking at Ida Sproul's journal from her tenure as first lady and saw a note about tomato aspic, "and we must have that again next year, it was really very good." [laughter] Simpler days.*

Wilson: Lila and the house staff keep a careful record of what the menu was and exactly who was invited and exactly who came and they have a master record of guests who have been at University House. If some important person has not been [there] recently then he's put on the list. The entertainment is used as a public relations device to keep important people and important alumni and faculty and staff as happy as they can be.

It's a remarkably varied group that is entertained at University House, perhaps more so under the Bowkers than under any previous chancellor. Maybe I've said this before, because he's entertained many athletic teams including, for example, the Russian wrestlers. [laughter] Our own Cal wrestling team was invited with them. Bowker also always has a Christmas party for his staff, for everybody from the lowliest file clerk up to the executive vice-chancellor. He always has a dinner for the retiring faculty members. He also has a reception for retiring staff members at which anybody, custodians or gardeners or people in the top management of the facilities management division, is invited to University House. Civic groups, city groups, are often included with the other groups as well as all these V.I.P.s, and very often under the Bowkers, for example, a student group like Prytanean might ask to use the house for one of their teas or functions. They do not request to be subsidized, and they don't request that the Bowkers be there, but might they use it? The Bowkers, if certain requirements are fulfilled, have allowed that to be. They have set up a policy about it.

So University House has become really a social center, a focus of campus affairs, many kinds of campus affairs, and I think Lila can give you the gross figures of the number of people who were entertained there during the Bowker regime. Now she'll be keeping the same record for the Heyman regime.

Riess: Wonderful! Really very gay somehow, much more so than I had ever realized. It's obviously what keeps the wheels greased nicely, among other things.

Wilson: And creates a kind of a family feeling on the campus, breaks down all of the libelous stereotypes that Berkeley is big and impersonal.

*An oral history interview with Ida Sproul is in process.

XII THE CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

[Interview 15: June 23, 1980]##

Riess: I see that you were on a centennial committee which subsequently disbanded. This implies that originally it was to have had a broader scope of operation?

Wilson: President Kerr thought it should be a nine-campus celebration and so he appointed a very high-level committee chaired by Professor Saunders of the San Francisco campuses--I don't know whether Saunders was the dean then or was the chancellor then--and including other very high-level people, but very few workers or experienced people. He didn't, for example, appoint me to the committee. I was surprised at the time and still am surprised because we had worked together when he was chancellor at Berkeley very amicably and he always sent me notes congratulating me on the events.

I thought if there was one university-wide committee I would surely be on it. Although I attended one meeting, it was as a guest only. I don't know for sure why the committee never got into gear and never produced anything. My impression was they spent all their time in grandiose plans and making grandiose charts--flows of communication and who reported to whom and so on--all these things. My impression was they did a lot of talking but made no decisions.

Riess: I should think the problem would be that eventually everybody would recognize that it was Berkeley's celebration and wonder what were they going to get out of it.

Wilson: I'm sure that was a factor, but each campus has its own history and each could celebrate that and participate in that way. But they acted like a "dog in the manger" for a few things. They were going to do this and they were going to do that. After it became apparent to Chancellor Heyns and Executive Vice-Chancellor Cheit that a system-wide committee wasn't getting anywhere, they immediately said, "Berkeley has to do its own."

Wilson: An example of the interference from the state-wide committee was when we decided we wanted a centennial medal. We wanted to honor various people for past service and people who had contributed to the celebration and whatnot. The state-wide committee heard of this and said, "No, we're going to have a centennial medal representing the whole university. You cannot do that." "Okay," we said, "we'll have to think of some other award."

Riess: The state-wide committee still existed?

Wilson: Yes, yes. So then we came up with the Centennial Citation. which was so useful and so popular that at the end of the centennial year Chancellor Heyns said, "We can't discontinue this. Let's just change the name to the Berkeley Citation," and as such it has remained. That was the origin of what is now the Berkeley Citation. It was a substitute for the medal which we were not allowed to give.

The Berkeley Fellows

Riess: The Berkeley Fellows, whose idea was that?

Wilson: That came out of a little committee on centennial honors and I persuaded George R. Stewart to be head of that. He's a very imaginative, creative guy, and together with him we devised the citation. The idea of the Berkeley Fellows was George Stewart's. He said there should be an honorific group (he never called it honorary) of a hundred members who will symbolize forever the centennial of the university.

Riess: Did "honorific" sound better, stronger?

Wilson: Yes, I think so. It sounds better.

It was to have no function. It didn't have to do things, pass resolutions, hold meetings. It meets once a year as guest of the chancellor for a big dinner, and it's turned out to be one of the most successful social functions on the calendar. These people often don't see each other for a year because they're very important and busy people. When the date of the Fellows dinner is decided, we notify them months ahead of time, asking them to save the date. There has never been a full attendance, of course, but we always have a pretty good attendance. There is a long pre-dinner reunion. The group doesn't drink too much but enjoys an hour or an hour-and-a-half just to visit around.

Wilson: I was not made a Berkeley Fellow myself until I retired from my academic job in 1976, because the rules of the fellowship state that no active member of the faculty or the administration or the regents can be a Berkeley Fellow. It has to be after you have retired, which makes the age of the fellowship rather high.

Riess: And you have to wait for attrition.

Wilson: That's right. The only opening comes when a member dies and then somebody is appointed in his place. Each one has a number and the assignment of the numbers was made by drawing lots at the first meeting of the Fellows, except for members one and two. Robert Gordon Sproul was assigned number one and Ida Sproul was assigned number two. The rest were all a matter of drawing lots.

Riess: Was the choice of those names the first time around made by committee or were people recommended?

Wilson: There was a special committee appointed for that. Stewart was on it and I sat in with it. We sent invitations to make nominations to a high-level group--all of the emeritus professors, all of the deans and the heads of departments, the alumni counselors and the past alumni presidents and other friends of the university. We had a great outpouring of nominations for this--as I recall, about five hundred nominations. So we had to choose one out of five, and the committee then gradually narrowed them down and, according to the rules, the chancellor made the final selection because he is the host or the chairman; he is not an actual Fellow because he is still an active administrator.

I attended all of the dinners from the beginning just as a helper. Of course, I thought it would be nice after I retired officially from my academic position to be appointed, but I didn't know how it was going to be done. Following the creation of the group there was an advisory committee appointed to carry on nominating the new Fellows when vacancies occurred. There are always two or three appointments and as many as five or six in a year, depending on the attrition. The advisory committee, which has always been headed by Justice Wakefield Taylor, meets just once a year.

Riess: Who is he?

Wilson: Wakefield Taylor? He is the presiding justice of the state court of appeals in San Francisco, and he's done everything. When Boalt Hall had its 50th anniversary, there was Justice Taylor, When I-House had its 50th anniversary, there was Justice Taylor, who had lived at I-House. I know he was the student body president here

Wilson: and I know he's been president of the Alumni Association. He has been president or head of the Trustees of the UC Berkeley Foundation. He is third-generation and his children are fourth-generation Berkeley grads. So he is a very distinguished guy. Well, he is chairman of the advisory committee.

We get nominations from everybody. We send a little notice to the Fellows saying, "If you have anybody to nominate..." and we get quite a few nominations. There are so many good people that it's difficult to choose.

Riess: Are there forms for nominating?

Wilson: No, just a letter saying why you think the person is eligible.

Riess: Then do people mass together so that you get a lot of letters on one person? Do you think there is a concerted effort to get some people in?

Wilson: Sometimes, but usually it works out that maybe one person is immediately eligible; others are put on a kind of waiting list, on an alternate list. The following year, "Shouldn't we go back to So-and-So?" is the comment. Maybe he moves up. "No, we better wait another year," and so on. After a person has been on the list for three or four years we say, "Well, it's time now. We can't again pass this man over."

The recommendations go to the chancellor and the chancellor makes the final decision. That's the way the fellowship is set up. The chancellor can appoint anybody regardless of the recommendations of his advisory committee. As a matter of fact, he almost always follows the recommendations of the advisory committee.

Since I was doing the staff work for the advisory committee when I became eligible to become a Fellow, we had the meeting of the advisory committee and my name wasn't even discussed. There were four openings. Three people were chosen as top choices. The committee then said, "This fourth place. Let's have several names in there to give the chancellor some leeway." This was done.

I was the one who carried the list to the chancellor and he approved the first three recommendations. Then he came to the list for vacancy number four. He crossed them all off and wrote down my name. I said, "But this is illegal, Chancellor Bowker." He said, "Oh, no. The committee caucused by telephone and got me in on it. [laughter] They were trying to figure out a way to have it a complete surprise to have you at the dinner, but they couldn't figure out any way because you are responsible for getting the membership notices printed."

Wilson: Another thing that George Stewart suggested [was that] we have this elaborate volume called The Book of a Hundred Pages. It was an especially designed and printed book with a hundred pages, one for each membership. Some pages only have one name on them, yet. Some have two or three as the holders of that particular position have died. But it is a beautifully printed book.

Another tradition that developed was at the annual dinner there is a special wine glass given as a souvenir to each Fellow whether he attends the dinner or not. He takes the wine glass away with him if he attends the dinner. If not, we send him one. This happened because we had centennial wine glasses that were designed and sold at the ASUC store. There was some centennial flatware and all kinds of things. Well, the very first dinner, I forgot who had the idea, but we said it would be fun to give everybody a centennial wine glass as the first souvenir, and it was very popular. Everybody took home a wine glass.

The next year came along: "What shall we give as a souvenir?" "Let's continue to have a wine glass with gold letters, 'The Second Annual Dinner of the Berkeley Fellows,' and put the date on it." So now each person has quite a collection. They are not intrinsically expensive. If we could afford to have Waterford crystal especially etched it would be beautiful. It's an ordinary wine glass, but it has sentimental value. People who are going to miss the dinner and who are not aware that we always mail the goblet to the full membership afterward send frantic letters, "We can't come, but we want a wine glass. Would you be sure to see we get one?"

Riess: These little niceties sound very much like George Stewart's touches.

Wilson: It's the general policy of any committee that I've ever served on, "Let's be innovative. Let's be imaginative. Let's do something a little different, something that's a little elegant if we can." That's always the approach. When I appoint committees I see to it that there are those kinds of people on the committees.

Riess: Oh, so the niceties are coming from Garff Wilson.

Wilson: Well, some of them. But I choose a lot of people of the same kind so together we can hatch up all kinds of novelties.

Riess: In the selection of the original one hundred, it must have been difficult not to be bounded by equal representation from every spectrum of the university. Is that, in fact, the case?

Wilson: It was very much the policy, that we had to have a certain number of retired administrators, a certain number of retired faculty members, a certain number of women, and a certain number of friends of the university.

Wilson: I want to emphasize: this is not exclusively for alumni. For example, Kurt Herbert Adler is a Berkeley Fellow, and the late Wallace Johnson, the mayor of Berkeley, was a Berkeley Fellow, and there are a lot of good friends of the university from the community. We would like to have the various professions represented. I know we don't have an M.D. in the fellowship, and each year Justice Taylor says, "Who can we put in who is a distinguished M.D.?" We know that alumni of the university will be in the majority because they have had a greater opportunity to serve and make themselves known than non-alumni, who are out in the field; obviously, we will get a lot of distinguished retired professors.

This year, Glenn Seaborg was made a Berkeley Fellow. I remember the chancellor's remarks because I drafted part of them. [laughter] When he introduced the new Fellow, Seaborg, he said, "Most people would imagine that he would have been a charter member because he served in almost every capacity it's possible to hold in the university, from instructor in chemistry up to chancellor, and had received all of the honors that the world can give a scientist. But he hasn't been elected to the fellowship until now." Then the chancellor put in his own words, "You know, our standards are very high." [laughter] This created laughter. But he pointed out that Seaborg had been an active faculty member up until now, or administrator, and was thus not eligible. When Glenn Seaborg became eligible, why, he had such a strong claim he went in immediately and somebody else had to wait his turn.

We have such an unusually distinguished faculty here. When you look over the retiring list in any year you see half a dozen people who are world famous and who really should be eligible.

Riess: Gene Trefethen and Steve Bechtel and people like that. How do you decide to put a Bechtel on and not a professor?

Wilson: They were, as I recall, charter members. They were among the big industrialists, and had not only contributed money and helped raise money, but they had served in many other capacities. Gene Trefethen, for example, never turns down a call to serve on any committee. He is remarkable. And so are the Bechtels.

So far we've had only one death since the last meeting of the Fellows in February. We'll have a problem coming up because both the Bowkers are now eligible and both of them have served unusually long and well.

Riess: I was just going to ask you about couples.

Wilson: Heyns is listed as the founder; that's the way he got around it, and Heyns is still listed as a founder and is not a number on the roll. Esther Heyns was made a Fellow because she again had been one of these quiet, competent women that are the salt of the earth, and her loyalty to the university which wasn't her alma mater was prodigious. We submitted her name to Chancellor Heyns and he okayed it, didn't say anything about himself. Then we had Justice Taylor announce that the advisory committee was recommending that Chancellor Heyns be forever listed as the founder and thus eligible for all of the rights and privileges and powers that that entailed and so we got them both in on that basis, one listed as the founder, but Esther Heyns with a number on the roll.

We'll have a problem when the Bowkers' names come up because they both are distinguished in their own right and distinguished in their contribution to the Berkeley campus.

Riess: When you do have the dinner, it's not that one can bring one's wife.

Wilson: No, the spouses are never included. It's only the member.

So it's developed kind of a mystique, and various entries in Who's Who may now carry "charter member of Berkeley Fellows" and that sort of thing. It's a quiet honor, but it's a very nice institution which grew out of the centennial celebration.

Riess: I noticed the Centennial Citations were handed out at various events that entire year.

Wilson: That's right. We had continual meetings when a big event was coming up: "Now, who is the key person? Who has done all the work on this event? Who is going to be the star of this event and so on?" Then we gave him or her a Centennial Citation.

Riess: It sounds like it was a way of backing up and thanking people who weren't thanked by being a Berkeley Fellow.

Wilson: That's right. We were able to recognize and reward long-standing service to the university.

There Was Light

Wilson: One of the projects of the centennial year was a book which was edited by Irving Stone but didn't come out until after the celebration was over. The title of the book was There Was Light. (I always thought it should be And There Was Light. Incidentally, I was the one who suggested the title. Irving had another more cumbersome title and I said, "The motto is 'Let There Be Light' and in the Bible it says, 'And there was light.'" He liked that, but he didn't like the "and.")

We again had a special committee to advise the editor and to go over a long list of alumni. We wanted to get alumni from all kinds of fields: a classroom teacher, for example, who had done a superlative job in her eighth-grade class or fifth-grade class and was known as a master teacher. We wanted such people as well as the luminaries like Joe Kapp, who was chosen to represent Cal athletes.

Riess: What were your sources for recommendation on that?

Wilson: Dick Erickson, who was then head of the Alumni Association, I think prepared a great file of active alumni. The Alumni Association knows them pretty well because they choose an alumnus of the year and there are always many nominations for that. They also have what they used to call the "alumni service award"--they now call it the Alumni Citation--and they give several of these awards every year.

Riess: So it gets pretty much back into the grassroots of the alumni?

Wilson: Yes. We surveyed people who had served on the Alumni Council, or who had served as president of the Alumni Association, because the book was to be by people who had a degree from Berkeley. You couldn't be just a friend of the university. We got a very good cross section.

When the book was finally published we had a big party with as many of the authors present as possible. It was a big autograph-signing party in Pauley Ballroom and we gave each of the authors a Centennial Citation because they had contributed to the book. That was a nice event, too.

Riess: It's a very interesting and surprising book. Was the ability to write a good four or five pages taken into consideration?

Wilson: No, it was just the fact that they represented a different kind of achievement in a different field, and some of them--I know Joe Kapp got a good deal of help from a professional writer and maybe some of the rest of them did. But that was Irving Stone's big contribution. He would get a manuscript and edit it himself and send it back with suggestions and whatnot. I know Reva Beck Bosone, whom I've mentioned before, was in Washington at the time. She was the judicial officer for the post office department at the time. She submitted a manuscript and Irving wrote back and suggested certain revisions and she made the revisions and she was continually writing to me and saying, "What a fine editor he is; oh, he makes good suggestions," and so on. I'm sure John Kenneth Galbraith, who has the first essay in the book, didn't need any help.

Riess: It sounds like you moved in on the whole centennial operation, almost waiting in the wings there.

Wilson: As a matter of fact, there had been a planning committee preceding this actual committee which I headed, and it wasn't getting very far very fast. I was scheduled for a sabbatical leave in the year '67-'68, the academic year. I remember Vice-Chancellor Cheit calling me and saying, "Garff, we've got to get this show on the road, you are the man who has the experience, and I know you are due for a sabbatical leave, but would you consider postponing your leave for a year and then we'll add a little time to it? I can give you an assistant and staff and whatnot to really get things started."

I said, "I'm inclined to say yes, but let me think about it." I thought about it and accepted. We then got together a crash program working very fast with a small group of people I knew were doers and so by the time September '67 came we were ready. We decided to celebrate the centennial year in the fall of '67 and the spring of '68.

Ceremonies, Dedications, and Cultural Events

Riess: Now, with such things as the major dedications--Zellerbach and Lawrence Hall of Science and so on--did you just take advantage of the simultaneity?

Wilson: Part of the crash program was immediately to find out what was scheduled on the campus anyway, and could it be converted to use in the centennial celebration? Sure, we wrote all of the chairmen

Wilson: of all of the departments and all the heads of all of the Academic Senate committees and all of the learned societies and so on: "Do you have anything planned during this time? Can you convert something you have planned into an event of the centennial celebration?" A lot of good things came up and a lot of things were designed from scratch.

The completion of Zellerbach Auditorium had to be rushed. The Playhouse wasn't completed and used until the following January. But the hall was in good enough shape to have a splendid dedication series of concerts in Zellerbach Auditorium, after which it was closed for several months until the building could be completed. [laughter]

As I look over my own report here, I am amused to remember certain things.* The flag-raising ceremony was the official opening, and then the opening of the Centennial Trail, September 30. The centennial flag, our burgee it was called, was designed and the design was sent to a flag maker in Los Angeles. He assured us he would have it ready in time. Two weeks before the event, the signals weren't very promising. I'm a worrier so I went on my own to the dramatic art department to Shan Otey, who is the costumer, and I said, "Can you make us a flag, just a single flag, if the actual ones don't arrive?" She said, "Let me study it." She came up with the idea that we couldn't cut and sew and put together a flag in time, but said, "I think we could paint a flag." So she did and sure enough--

Riess: [laughter] You needed it?

Wilson: Yes. We phoned in, frantic, to Los Angeles. Oh, they had had a strike or they had something, but it was on its way or it had been miss-sent. So the flag that was raised by the first lady of the campus, Mrs. Heyns, was this handpainted flag, and that's now in the archives. That's the original flag.

One of the pretty things that we did was to have nine flag poles erected on Oxford Street on the campus there and we raised those flags, one for each campus of the university.

Riess: That's a gesture to the nine campuses. Did you have to keep saying, "We've got to remember," or did you basically make it a Berkeley celebration?

Wilson: We made it a Berkeley celebration.

Riess: Were things going on at the other campuses then in that year?

*See appended report.

Wilson: I don't remember anything. The things that finally grew out of the state-wide committee were the two publications, the Centennial Record, and the history of the university by Verne Stadtman [University of California, 1868-1968].

Riess: That was worth getting done.

Wilson: Here we have the centennial flag raising [looking at pictures], with May Dornin's handwriting on the thing. Oh, the students loved this! The football cannon boomed each time a flag was raised. We gave out balloons to all the kids; we had balloons all over. There were more than nine flags, of course; there were a dozen flag poles along there--the United States flag, the State of California, the university flag, and then a centennial burgee for each campus.

Riess: Oh, that's wonderfully handsome. They flew all year?

Wilson: They flew all year.

Riess: Were they raised and lowered every day?

Wilson: Yes, they had to be.

There were a lot of students helping with the ceremony, including, I guess, members of the Californians, a campus service group. There were two guys from Los Angeles who said, "Oh, will you let us raise the Los Angeles flag?" I thought, "Isn't that nice and loyal of them to do that?" So they raised the Los Angeles flag and it was upside down! [laughter] They had purposely done it upside down, but it was immediately righted.

Somewhere we have the snide report of the Daily Californian on this business. They missed the fun part of it completely and wrote a satirical thing about "a university function where they fired cannons and gave candy to the kids, and balloons, and all this undergraduate nonsense." [laughter] They missed the point.

One of the strange things was that the dramatic art department didn't cooperate with the centennial. Of course, Zellerbach was just being built. But we had a good many dramatic events, although they were by A.C.T. and by other companies. Travis Bogard was the chairman of the subcommittee on drama and he brought over a lot of good things.

Riess: Did the dramatic art department feel that they couldn't give their product away, that they were too professional?

Wilson: They had been hesitant about this. Philadelphia Here I Come was given on October 8 by the San Francisco Theater Company in Wheeler Auditorium. They [dramatic arts] were reluctant to use Wheeler Auditorium. Later, on the 28th, we had A.C.T. giving O'Neill's Long Day's Journey Into Night two nights in Wheeler Auditorium. But they [dramatic arts] were unwilling to do anything.

Since the one field of special knowledge I have is the history of the American theater, I thought it would be a perfect opportunity that year to give a series of landmark plays in the history of the American theater. The Contrast is the first comedy by a native American, and it's still a delightful play. It could have been done, right up to Eugene O'Neill, or later. But somehow the dramatic art department didn't want to do it.

Riess: It sounds like you talked to them face to face.

Wilson: Sure, and I suggested it again when we were celebrating the bicentennial of the nation in '76. "Wouldn't they like to do a series like that?" "No, they wouldn't." Another example of the freedom and the independence which we enjoy on this campus!

Riess: How about the music department? Did they participate?

Wilson: The one thing I remember is that Christopher Keene, who is now a rising young conductor, came to me and asked if the student opera theater which he had founded by himself and was running without the assistance or approval of the music department, whether we would subsidize a production, and my steering committee thought it would be great to have a student production. But the students couldn't get any auditorium on the campus. They gave it at the Berkeley Little Theater, which is now the Florence Schwimley Theater.

We gave Christopher Keene a Centennial Citation for the opera because he put it together single-handedly. He's now conducting at the Spoleto Festival in Spoleto, Italy. He conducted an Oakland Symphony concert last year, and he's a rising young conductor.

The big contribution of the music department was the opening of Zellerbach Hall with a Stravinsky festival. They played the Symphony of Psalms and Oedipus Rex. We had a very grand affair then. Igor Stravinsky was in attendance, but he was too weak to conduct, and his assistant Robert Craft conducted. Gregory Peck, a Cal alumnus and at that time president of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, presided both nights. Stravinsky got a Centennial Citation, and altogether it was a grandiose affair. The

Wilson: music department, of course, provided their own symphony orchestra and their own chorus, and Craft and Stravinsky rehearsed them. So that was their big contribution.

Another student musical contribution was the California Marching Band. I've been a friend of the band for years and I think they continually represent California spirit at its best for the undergraduates. My first budget was, I think, only \$75,000 for the whole shebang, and I immediately pledged \$25,000 of that for a marching band tour of the state of California to publicize the centennial celebration. The band did a wonderful job of carrying the message that "we are a hundred years old and have accomplished all of these things and hope for your support in the future."

Riess: They would do it free, wouldn't they?

Wilson: Oh, yes, it was all free, performed in a public square or in a public park.

Riess: The \$50,000 was just to get them from one place to the next?

Wilson: The \$25,000--I gave them one third of that whole budget. (Later that budget was raised because we couldn't do all of these things without a great deal more money.) The money allotted to the band was to move them from place to place, their transportation. Alumni clubs along the way undertook to find them housing and provide them meals and whatnot.

The band is noted for its ingenuity in making tours. They toured Europe in 1958 and played at the World's Fair in Belgium. Later they toured Japan and played all over that country. They were one of the two official bicentennial bands. They toured the U.S.A. in 1976 because they think ahead and they get the backing and the support. They had very little trouble raising money because they are so beloved of Berkeley alumni. When the band starts playing its traditional airs, the alumni all start feeling thrills.

Riess: So that was a way in which you went out into the state with the centennial.

Wilson: That's right. Another way didn't come until the following fall when the alumni sent its centennial caravan around the state. They hadn't been able to get it organized and ready until the fall of 1968.

Riess: That was just a history, memorabilia thing?

Wilson: It was a great series of panels illustrating the growth of the university, illustrating the departments and the products of the university. They had a running commentary, again with Gregory Peck doing the narration, about the growth and the achievements of the university. They took it to centers throughout the state where there were active alumni clubs, and they invited the whole community to come in and walk around these panels and listen to the commentary and see the motion picture that was connected with it and so on. It was very successful.

Riess: Was there a film made for the centennial?

Wilson: Yes, it was part of the caravan, as I recall. It's a pity that there wasn't some sentiment to preserve this centennial caravan, use it in future events, bringing it up-to-date and so on, but they decided it was too expensive to store, to maintain, so it had to be dismantled.

There was real sentiment to keep the twelve flag poles down along Oxford because as you can see from the photograph it made a beautiful display. It was delightful to drive along there and see that lovely display. But the flag poles were temporary flag poles; we couldn't afford steel flag poles embedded in concrete and so on. When the problem came--shall we have them permanent?--that meant taking the temporary ones down and spending a huge amount to have permanent types installed. Also they would have to be serviced year after year and the flags raised and so on. It was decided that there was not enough money for that.

Riess: It sounds like a perfect class project.

Wilson: Yes, but there wasn't any class that came to the fore there.

Garff Wilson Traditions##

The Christmas Carol

Riess: I see that one of the events of that year was Garff Wilson doing his annual reading of the Christmas Carol and, of course, nothing could have stopped that anyway!

Wilson: That's right!

Riess: How did that tradition begin?

Wilson: As I recall, it began in 1962. It's only eighteen years old, if my memory is right. But you see, one doesn't start a thing like that looking ahead and expecting it to become a tradition! Arleigh Williams' daughter, Linda Williams, was chairman of the program board for the student union. She came up with the idea they should have a Christmas party in the student union, and would I do a reading of some kind. The year before, at the Alumni House, I think, I had done a reading as a substitute for Gerry Marsh, who used to read The Littlest Angel for the Alumni House Christmas party. I don't know whether he was away or what, but I did a cutting from the novel Ben Hur--which is not awfully good writing.

Linda Williams and her committee came to me and asked if I could do a reading. I said, "I will not read The Littlest Angel. That is much too schmaltzy." "Well, what will you do?" (I didn't like the Ben Hur cutting very much either.) I said, "Really, the only good literature outside the Gospels is Dickens' Christmas Carol." "Oh, that would be great! Would you do that?" I said, "But it takes four hours if you read it, it's a long novelette, but let me look it over and see whether I think I can do a cutting."

I started reading it and envisioning it and I got hooked. It is a never-ending source of interest and wonder to me that Dickens was able to include every kind of sentimentality in that and make it work. There is no appeal to the heart that he has forgotten.

Riess: Do you have to temper the sentimentality?

Wilson: No, I should say not. When it's done at Christmastime everybody's ready for it and everybody knows it. "Alas, for Tiny Tim. He bore a little crutch and his limbs were supported by an iron frame...and his active little crutch was heard on the floor," and "'God bless us all,' says Tiny Tim the last of all." No, you leave it in and you don't mock it. You do it with great sincerity and in the context of the whole thing it works very well.

Riess: Do you cut it differently each year?

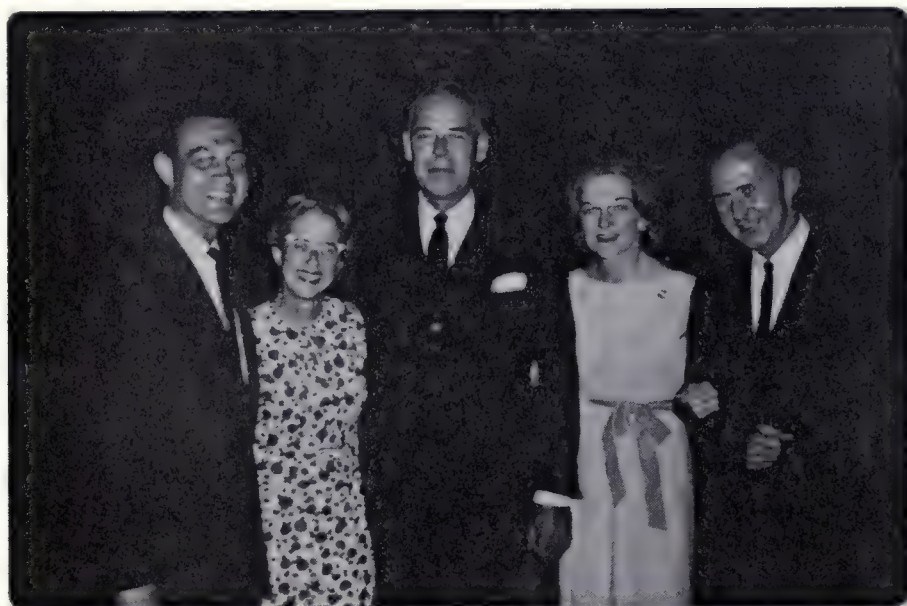
Wilson: No, no. To cut something takes several steps. You go through and make a first cutting and then estimate that that will take about an hour-and-a-half. You want to get it down to fifty minutes, the traditional professorial length of time. Then you go back and see how it can be cut here, how it can be summarized there. I always announce that it is my own adaptation of the thing. I have put in summaries in my own words, not Dickens' words.



December 22, 1976. After reading of Dickens' A Christmas Carol at the Orinda Country Club.



Garff and Mother Wilson on her 90th birthday, with Garff's sisters: Margaret, Janice, and Helen, April 15, 1972.



At Villa Taverna (Rome), the residence of the U.S. Ambassador to Italy, Summer 1963. Left to right: Dick Erickson, Executive Director of the Cal Alumni Assoc., Natalie Cohen, '34, Ambassador and Mrs. Frederick K. Reinhardt, '33, and Garff Wilson.

Riess: And do you change voices?

Wilson: Oh, yes, sure. My best voice is Scrooge. [in rough voice] "Bah Humbug!"

It was first done in Heller Lounge with music preceding it and they lit a fire and they had hot cider and doughnuts and so on, and it was enormously successful. The next year the students came back and said, "Let's do that again." It became sort of a project of SUPERB [Student Union Program Entertainment and Recreation Board]. So then--what year was it?--we did it twice. The alumni wanted me to do it in the Alumni House for something they were sponsoring at the time. SUPERB said, "No, no, it's our program. We want it here." I compromised by saying, "If you both get an audience, I'll do it twice." But then SUPERB seems to have become disinterested in it. The alumni like to have it there so now it's at the Alumni House and they sponsor it rather than SUPERB sponsoring it.

Riess: That's an evening event?

Wilson: No, four o'clock in the afternoon.

The thing that warms my heart is the former students of mine who come with their kids--some of them are teenagers now and have been coming year after year--and they all say it's the beginning of the Christmas season for them. I always think, "Nobody's going to come this year. It hasn't been publicized at all," but we get a good, full house every time.

Tribute to Andy Smith

Riess: While we're off on the same tangent, the Andy Smith eulogy--what is the story behind that tradition?

Wilson: That is another tradition of long standing which began quite accidentally. I have given several versions of this. [laughter] I should be consistent.

I had not been back from the war for very long; it was 1948, or '49. One Friday afternoon preceding the big game I had been watching the parade, and was walking back to my apartment, along Telegraph to Dwight Way, and along came a sound truck paging me. Now, this always startles me, to have a voice like the voice of Jehovah

Wilson: coming out of the heavens saying, "Garff Wilson, please report to the judges' stand inside Sather Gate." (The parade had gone through Sather Gate and the judges' stand was there.) I reported, and here was a little group of student leaders: Lou White McNary was one of them and Bud Hobbs was another one.

They said, "We've got a crisis on our hands. Mel Venter has been reading the Andy Smith eulogy for several years. He has been getting more and more uppity about it and won't say whether he will come or not. Today he told us he won't come and won't lend us his manuscript." I said, "What a pity. What do you want me to do?" "We want you to write a eulogy so we can give it this evening." I said, "It's now five o'clock. When does your rally start?" "At eight."

"Now, really," I said, "I didn't know Andy Smith. I only know a little bit about his record." Bud Hobbs said, "We have all of the scrapbooks." (He was an SAE and Andy Smith was an SAE.) "We have all his scrapbooks at our house. You can bone up on him and write something." I said, "I don't think I can do it." They said, "It will ruin the rally if we don't have a eulogy. Are we going to let commercial artists like Mel Venter ruin a Cal rally?" They started appealing. "We've got enough talent to do something." So they talked me into it and I said, "Okay, go and get me a carton of milk and some doughnuts and bring down those books as fast as you can and let me pour through them."

So we got together something and Bud Hobbs read it the first year. Bud had a nice voice and I was able to go over it with him a couple of times and help him with the delivery. It was very successful. He did a beautiful job, and I said afterward to Jay Martin, who was president of the class of 1949--this may have been the fall of '48--I said to Jay after the rally, "How did you like the eulogy?" He said, "Oh, I think it was great. It's always great."

I said, "Was it any different this year from last?" He didn't know anything about the crisis and he said, "Well, not very. There was one thing missing. It seems to me there was always a brief survey of the five years of never losing a game." I thought, "Well, I better put that in next time." So I did add that and whether Bud was still here and read it the second year, my memory is unclear.

Anyway, in either the second or the third year suddenly big game week came around and a breathless couple of students came rushing in and said, "Oh, we're in a bind! We can't find any copy of the

Wilson: eulogy. Do you know where we can get a copy?" I said, "Yes, I have one in my file." "You do? How did you happen to have one?" I said, "Well, I wrote this version, but you better go to Mel Venter." "Oh, he's gone. Will you read it?" I said, "No, that wasn't the tradition. Hobbs has read it." "But he's gone." "I'll train somebody." "Okay, we'll get you a couple of names." "Get them soon because the rally is in only three or four days." They didn't get anyone. They said, "Oh, please read it," so that's when I started reading it.

Remember, we are now in the beginning of the decade of the 1950s, that lovely decade of students who were so happy to be alive with Daddy home from the war; they were the "silent generation." They worked hard. They revived a lot of the old traditions. They were not rebellious and loved this schmaltzy thing.

The Andy Smith eulogy as it's given is the height of sentimentality. It comes at the end of the rally. The fire has burned down, then all of the lights in the theater go out, and everybody stands and lights a candle. The Glee Club in those days all lit candles and stood behind me and started singing softly. Then I began, "On the eve of another big game"--and so on. At the end of it, there is a moment of silence and then the bugler on the hill in back of the Greek Theater, or two trumpets, played taps. The Glee Club at the end was singing "Hail to California" and closed with a mighty crescendo, "Hail, hail, hail." Then silence. Then the taps. Then the yell leader walked on and said, "Now, we'll end the rally with 'All Hail Blue and Gold.'" At its best, it used to send the shivers up and down the spines of even the hardest old cynics.

Then came the turbulent sixties and the tradition almost died. I was in favor of letting it die because I believe that traditions are like any other thing. They are born and they develop and they reach maturity and then they start to decline. They reach old age and are no longer viable, no longer pertinent, and I thought that had happened. But the rally committee, like the band, was loath to let it die.

We tried all kinds of things--placing it in a different part of the rally. One year we had it at the beginning. We said, "This rally is dedicated to Andy Smith. So let's have the Smith eulogy at the beginning." But cutting it down, removing most of the sentiment and so on, that didn't work. In the last couple of years we've gone back to the old format and they're starting to listen again and starting to respond as they did, although we've removed the taps because [laughter] that's a little too much. But the eulogy has survived.

Riess: I'm interested that you do make some changes.

Wilson: Oh, yes, it's much shorter now. I trimmed it down. I did add the story of the years. "The first of the 'wonder teams,' the team of 1920, went through the season undefeated; in the following year it was also undefeated. In those first three years, the California team had scored 1,220 points to their opponents' total, in three years, of eighty-one." When I say that, there's a gasp in the audience. Whether that could be done in modern football, I don't know. "Then for two more years they had some ties but no defeats and their total record..."

The most difficult and the most unsuccessful reading of the eulogy was this last fall. It rained all day and I had three different rallies or class reunions to attend. I left for San Francisco for the reunion of the Class of 1949, I guess it was, and could stay only a few minutes. I thought for sure the rally would be called off, because the rain was still coming down. But I called the rally committee from San Francisco and they said, "Oh, no, we're going to have it rain or shine."

I made my way back to the Greek Theater and here were two or three thousand people sitting in the rain. There wasn't much fire. The P.A. system had broken down. I had a cold and was hoarse. I should have given a very truncated version. But here were the kids working their heads off and shouting at this crowd through megaphones, standing between the fire and the arena, and so I did it shouting with a microphone and in the rain, and it was not very good.

Here's a footnote to the thing. I never read or heard Mel Venter's version. I thought that he had devised it. A year ago I started having correspondence with a man named Tom "Bud" Moriarty, ex-Class of 1925, who said that the eulogy which Mel Venter had read was his composition. Then he went on to say, "Although I lost touch with Cal events in ensuing decades, I was told of the brilliant delivery of the eulogy by Dr. Garff Wilson." He was of the opinion that I was using his text.

Nobody had ever told me, it had never been suggested, that Venter hadn't composed the eulogy. So I immediately wrote Moriarty and gave him the story of how I wrote a different eulogy, and I sent him the text and he wrote back. He was a very nice guy, sent me his text too, and we agreed that mine should be copyrighted, as his was copyrighted, and it has been. His was called "The Andy Smith Eulogy" and it was copyrighted in 1977. I call mine "A Tribute to Andy Smith," copyrighted in 1978.

Riess: This is all in the archives?

Wilson: Yes. It's an astonishing development.

Moriarty's was written in the old style, and began, "High above the walls of California Memorial Stadium the west wind sings tonight of a great and lonely leader whose heart and mind and body fused into the inspiration supreme for eleven fighting gentlemen in gold-ringed arms of blue. He was rail thin and he was tall and his grim eyes of sea blue sparkled over the high cheekbones of his lean, hungry, Nordic face." Well, you couldn't possibly read that for a rally.

Riess: But Mel Venter read that.

Wilson: Yes, and maybe it occurs to me that he got the feeling he couldn't make it successful. I would never say this to the fine old alumnus of the Class of 1925.

Riess: Please say the first paragraph of yours.

Wilson: "On the eve of another big game, let us pause to pay tribute to the memory of a man who has become an ideal and a legend," and it goes on, "Andy Smith is a name that will never be forgotten in the history of the University of California." I do it more matter-of-factly, but you can put in some sentiment if you have had a good rally, if the spirit is there.

Incidentally, I have been asked countless times to come to service clubs, to come to ladies' clubs, to come to an evening sociable, and read the Andy Smith eulogy. I say, "My arrangement with the original student body representatives was that only on big game night or the night before the big game at the rally will I read it." Then I say, "It's a good policy to keep because it's a schmaltzy thing and it requires a particular setting to succeed. If it were read at a luncheon club, why--"

Riess: To the clatter of chicken salad!

Wilson: Yes, it would be ludicrous.

Riess: You say it's a tradition that will never die. Well, it would die if somebody stopped reading it.

Wilson: Oh, sure, sure. When I feel my days are numbered, I will try to find somebody who loves the university, who is around here all the time, and pass it on to him or her.

Wilson: I have read it a few times under another circumstance. When Ray Wilsey was football coach here--Ray was a dear friend of mine, a former student and a good drinking buddy, and I was delighted when he was chosen coach and heartbroken when he had to leave because of some questionable activity of some of his assistant coaches which I don't think Ray was involved in. But anyway, Ray called me and said, "Garff, I would like to have you read the Andy Smith eulogy to the team." I said, "Oh, Ray, you know I don't read it except at the rally once a year and that's all." Then I explained it wouldn't be effective without that setting.

He said, "But I think you will have an equally effective setting. I want you to read it on Friday afternoon, the day before the big game. We do our final practice in the stadium. In November the shadows are long. I'll bring the team over to the Andy Smith memorial bench. I'll have the seniors sit on the bench and the others around them and then introduce you. They're charged up. I want them to be emotionally choked up. This is the point of the thing. Will you try it?"

"It might work. Let's do try it." And it did work beautifully. I choked up! [laughter] Because here, at the end of my tribute to Andy Smith, the spine-tingling episode is the funeral:

On the day of his funeral, ten thousand of his friends gathered at the great arch of the California Memorial Stadium to pay him final tribute. The entrance to the stadium, past which no one was allowed to go, was hung with a wilderness of flowers. His friends spoke the words of grief and tribute which one speaks at the passing of a rare spirit. The man who brought him to Berkeley said: "His love for the university is shown even in his choice of a final resting place. Here he lies where he longed to be, a great sportsman, a great teacher of fair play..." When these words were finished, the crowd stood silent while an airplane circled over head; then it dipped low; and as it passed over the locked and silent stadium, it scattered the ashes of Andy Smith--as he had wished--over the field where he had worked and fought his battles, there to remain forever.

Riess: Did the team win?

Wilson: I think they did! [laughter] Anyway, Ray had me do it every year after that and they didn't always win. But it was another setting that enabled the thing to be very effective.

Riess: The lengthening shadows are always a good thing to have!

Wilson: Yes, and the emotional feeling these football players have. They don't know the history of the wonder teams, that they went for five years without a defeat, and those scores! They are stunned and amazed.

When Coach Mike White came along this tradition was abandoned. He never asked me, although some of his team did. When Roger Theder came in two years ago several of the players said, "You should get Wilson to give us the eulogy before the big game." That first year he did have me do it and it was quite successful. Last year he didn't and they won! [laughter]

So, an amazing series of events has connected me with this tradition. It almost died away, but now it seems to be healthy again.

"The illusion of the first time"

Wilson: Another annual thing is my "highlights of the history of California football," which ends the awards banquet at the end of each football season. That started, oh, twelve or fourteen years ago and is still going on.

Riess: Is it hard to maintain enthusiasm for your traditional readings? How do you develop a style?

Wilson: It grows over the years, and you hope not to fall into mannerisms of speech and of gesture and of facial tics. I always try to have some of my stern critics in the audience to tell me--has it been natural? Has it been sincere? Has it been lucid, too? I remember the late Bob Sibley, who was a fine, loyal Californian and for twenty-five years the executive manager of the California Alumni Association. Toward the end of his career I remember hearing him speak many times and he fell into a rut in which he repeated every effect and every facial tic and it became painful if you listened to him very often. That is what I certainly don't want to do.

Riess: It's like the feeling of amazement at the actor in production year after year after year. Does it happen to you, that you are in the middle of a presentation and you don't even remember where you are?

Wilson: Sure, and to avoid that you must give what William Gillette called "the illusion of the first time." No matter how many times you play the part, you've got to make the audience feel that it's absolutely spontaneous and coming from you for the very first time. A good actor knows how to do this. He always has to be aware of it. He also has to be renewing his own sources of emotion and sensitivity and identifying with the character in the situation each time, otherwise he will miss giving that illusion. Although there are a few supremely great artists whose mastery of technique is such that they can give the illusion and manipulate the audience completely while their minds are far, far away.

Riess: Any of them that we now enjoy?

Wilson: No, I'm thinking of some of the great performers of the past. One of them, a German actress named Fanny Janauschek, who came to the United States, learned English, and became a great American performer. Otis Skinner played with her many times and he said how astonished he was at observing that Madame Janauschek in a tragic role like Mary Stuart or like Lady Macbeth could have the audience in her grip and out of the corner of her mouth make funny asides or turn around and readjust her drapery and say, "For God's sake, move over a little bit." [laughter] Absolutely detached. Her technique was so great that she could manipulate an audience.

Riess: If you see your audience drifting away in these presentations that are so tried and true, do you alter them?

Wilson: Yes, yes, there are all kinds of things to do. You shift gears, you pause, you change tempo, change volume, you introduce something new, or you just skip over something to another part that will renew their interest, or you stop altogether. During the ugly sixties, that is the end of the sixties, with the Andy Smith eulogy, if the audience was not listening, I just cut it short and went right to the end. So you watch and adjust.

Fireworks, Balloons, Chess, Dogs, Alumni

Wilson: Now, back to the centennial celebration. We had fireworks at the beginning and at the end, and they were wonderful. We had one heck of a time getting permission because you know now with all public bodies dedicated to defending the safety of the citizens--

Riess: [laughter] But Mayor Johnson was a Berkeley Fellow!

Wilson: Well, this was before the fellowship was founded.

But we discovered we could have fireworks down on the Berkeley Marina where it was safe. The display was scheduled for the night of the reception for new students. So we stopped the reception and went up and sat on the roof where we could see all of the sky rockets and the rest. The police had all kinds of calls: "What's happening? Why the sky rockets?" Their answer was, "This is the beginning of the university centennial celebration." At the end we had another display to end the celebration. (I hadn't known how Chancellor Heyns would react to fireworks. Mrs. Heyns said, "He loves fireworks! Oh, he's just crazy about them.")

Another fun thing we did turned out surprisingly: Charter Week we had special open houses and lectures and so on and we wondered how we could decorate the campus and also indicate where there were exhibitions and where there were lectures. We hit upon the idea of helium balloons, great gold balloons. They were six or eight feet across. They were to be on ropes and fly over every building where there was a centennial exhibition or lecture going on.

Well, they were all raised late in the afternoon of the day before everything was to start and by the next morning all but three of them had been shot down. Kids and teenagers with b-b guns discovered these were the most wonderful targets. Not only shot down, but when the kids saw that they were not raised very high, they'd shinny up and steal the balloons. I was both furious and frustrated. We quickly got some replacements and then we discovered that we had to have great lengths of rope so the balloons would be high, high above the building and the building guarded so a b-b gun couldn't reach them. So we had only a few balloons. This glorious array of these huge, gold balloons floating over the campus, that was ruined by people who--[laughter]

Riess: As soon as you raised it a little higher you only--

Wilson: Raised the temptation, yes. But we only put them over places that were quite inaccessible and I think we only lost one of the replacements.

Riess: You also sponsored symposia which were a great success?

Wilson: Yes, and some of them were published, usually by departments which raised extra money to publish the papers that had been given there.

Riess: This Nicoloudi Dance and Theater Company of Athens. Was that something you had personal acquaintance with?

Wilson: Yes, in a way. Actually, Travis Bogard had more to do with it than I. By this time, as I told you, Mouzenidis had come to direct Antigone in '65. Then Travis had been in Greece directing the Delphi Institute of Classical Drama and he had met these people in the dance company. We would like to have brought over a play from the national theater, but this was beyond our means at the time. We got the dance company, which was touring the United States, I guess. It was not as well attended as Antigone had been, which drew thousands of people, but it was a contribution and we aimed to have something for everybody.

I didn't know there was a chess club in the ASUC until a very earnest young man came and said they had a chance of getting the national collegiate chess tournament here, but they needed some money. Could it be part of the centennial celebration? I said, "Why not? That sounds great to me, to have a chess tournament. How much do you need?" He named a modest sum and said, "We'll recover all of it because there is an entry fee and I think we'll have dozens of teams wanting to compete in this." Well, they held the tournament but didn't get much money. It cost the centennial budget some funds. But still, here was one group I thought should be supported. They had the centennial spirit of wanting to contribute something and using it as a basis for a tournament.

Riess: The Centennial Senior Pilgrimage, and the dedication of Ludwig's Fountain, and Joel Hildebrand dedicating a plaque to North Hall, and you giving a concluding address at the Campanile. Was some of that being done tongue in cheek or was it done in the spirit of the seriousness of the occasion?

Wilson: It was done very seriously. I recall those plaques. I don't know who reminded us that these historic buildings had been razed and there was no marking of the spot. Where the old Spreckels Art Building stood is now Morrison Hall, Hertz Hall. What was the other one?

Riess: The Library Annex.

Wilson: That was where North Hall once stood.

Riess: Birge Hall was Bacon Hall.

Wilson: Oh, Bacon, yes. There were just three, weren't there?

Riess: Then Ludwig's Fountain, of course, when they dedicated the plaque to the dog.

Wilson: [laughter] That's right! You have to read the plaque to realize it's a dog. If you say Ludwig's Fountain, everybody thinks Ludwig von Beethoven. But it's not. It's Ludwig the dog who immediately took possession of the fountain when it was first turned on. It was a charming sight and the regents approved the name.

Riess: Is there a guide to the campus that gives some of these histories that came out at that time?

Wilson: Oh, yes. One of the first events was the Centennial Trail, for which there was a brochure published to allow people to follow the trail and trace the history of the university through the various spots. There were a lot of publications, and I'm sure archives has saved them. At the end of my report I say that the total amount of money spent was never compiled. Everybody ran out of steam and out of gas [laughter] so we didn't get around to toting up all the budgets. But Phyllis Trudeau, our accountant, is still around. She might be able to resurrect it if anybody wanted it. It would be interesting historically.

Riess: The alumni centennial was March 28th and 29th, 1973. Was that an event that you worked on also?

Wilson: Oh, yes. I was approached by George Link, who was then the president of the Alumni Association, who said they wanted to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Alumni Association, which was in 1873. They had talked about all possibilities and they had decided that I was the only person who could do it. I said, "I'm still exhausted, George, from the last. I won't." George is the most persistent man I've ever met. He said, "Oh, you've got to do it, you've got to do it." I said, "I will not." "We will give you any kind of budget that you want." "I won't do it." "We'll give you any kind of committee you want. Think about it." "I won't do it."

Well, he kept after me for several days and finally you just give in. He was never angry about it. He was just quietly persistent--pressure, pressure, pressure. In retrospect it was kind of fun. I got several stalwarts from the centennial committee and we met once a week for lunch at the Alumni House. We put together a nice program.

Planning that, we went over the list of centennial events. What had worked? What had been most popular? What could be usable again? In this way we had a good head start. We had planted a centennial tree for the university centennial, and we planted another tree for the alumni centennial. We devised an alumni flag

Wilson: and raised it. We had a pageant. We reenacted the arrival of the Class of 1873 at South Hall. We had little episodes from university history. We had Benjamin Ide Wheeler on his horse. We had President Gilman make a speech. We had the kids arrive by horse and wagon. And so on, and so on.

XIII "BEING PART OF AND SERVING"

Committee Work

Intercampus Arts Exchange

Riess: What did you do on the Intercampus Arts Exchange Committee?

Wilson: It was an outgrowth of the California Club activities intended to increase the opportunities for groups from one campus to visit another campus or several other campuses and an opportunity for the activities of one campus to be put on display at several other campuses and so on. There were athletic relations between the campuses, but how about plays, how about concerts, how about all of these other things? The Arts Exchange Committee started out that way and has continued with moderate success, I would say, ever since. I believe now that Professor Travis Bogard, the chairman of our Committee on Arts and Lectures, is also chairman of the Intercampus Arts Exchange and it's probably run through the various campus committees on arts and lectures and so it has a regular status, I believe.

At first it was far less formal. A group would suggest that it would like to tour a play from UCLA, for example. The California Club undertook to find housing for the students who were going to bring the play up here. They undertook to find the money to treat the visitors to some kind of a meal or a luncheon. I think the committee itself provided the transportation. It was done on that basis, not only to save money but to create the maximum number of contacts between students. If you had to take a couple of students from UCLA into your apartment, you certainly got to know them a little better. I think it's more professionally done now.

- Riess: Are the strong arts programs still just on the Berkeley and the UCLA campuses?
- Wilson: Oh, no, there's a lot coming out of Santa Barbara, for example, and Davis has a very active theater program. I feel that they're way ahead of Berkeley in much of their theatrical activity.
- Riess: To come and perform at Zellerbach, why, Broadway productions come to Zellerbach.
- Wilson: Sure, sure, the top artists in the world come to Zellerbach. So it's an honor to be good enough to be invited.

Student Speakers##

[Interview 17: July 22, 1980]*

- Riess: Another of your many committee assignments was the Committee on Appointment of Student Commencement Speakers.
- Wilson: We had a very (we thought) fair system of choosing the commencement speakers; that is, we sent out notices to all of the student offices and put notices in the Daily Californian that any senior who was interested in being commencement speaker should come to a tryout. Anybody interested was given a sheet telling them how long a speech it should be, what the general subject matter should be, and on the appointed day the committee met. It took several hours sometimes to listen to these students who wanted to be the commencement speaker.

As I recall, we listed specific qualifications. It was supposed to be not the valedictorian, not the student with the highest grade point average. The University Medal goes to that person. It was to be an all-around representative student, one who had good grades, a "B" average or better, one who had been here preferably the whole four years, although that wasn't absolutely essential, one who had then participated in significant student activities and not only university affairs, but community affairs. So when the name was

*See note on page 369.

Wilson: announced at least the members of the graduating class would think, "Of course, that person is obviously eligible or obviously worthy of this honor."

All the time I was on the committee that was the way it was done and we had very little criticism. But one of the factors which led to abolishing the central commencement exercise was the hassle we got into in the late sixties over the student commencement speakers. Traditionally, the commencement program is too long as it is and we could afford to have only two students, each one speaking for five minutes.

Riess: One was the student speaker and one was who else?

Wilson: One was a man and one was a woman. Always both sexes were represented.

Riess: Had the equality of sexes been hammered out ages ago?

Wilson: Yes. When I was a commencement speaker in 1931, Mary Woods Bennett was the other student speaker. So far as I know, it's been going on forever.

But then the dissident groups on the campus, or the trouble-making groups on the campus, started to say, "We're not represented at the commencement exercise. There should be a speaker representing the Asian students; there should be a speaker representing the people from Spanish background. There should be a speaker representing all kinds of factions." As a matter of fact, they pressured Chancellor Heyns into putting a couple more student speakers on the program. As soon as you put on two more, then five other subdivisions wanted to be represented so that was one of the factors which led to the Council of Deans discussing the problem with the chancellor and deciding, "Let's decentralize the commencement and let the departments, schools, and colleges stage their own ceremonies. Let the Asian students have their own commencement if they want it and their own speakers and so on." So that was the end of the centralized commencement.

Riess: During that period when you agreeably added on a couple of speakers, did you screen them in the same way that you would screen other speakers?

Wilson: No. Under the circumstances, the militants who were demanding to be represented appointed their own representatives and Chancellor Heyns thought it wasn't worthwhile putting them through the whole process.

Riess: Was there a filibuster or did they abide by the five-minute rule?

Wilson: They almost did. I think they went a little over but not very much over.

Under the old system, when the man (and the woman) were chosen, then he was referred by the committee to a faculty advisor to help him with his speech, not only in organizing the material but also in coaching and delivery. When I was student speaker it was Martin Flaherty, head of the public speaking department. It turned out since I was in the speech department and the dramatic art department, and since I was public ceremonies chairman, and since I was on this committee, then what better person to advise the student than myself? So I was the advisor to the student speakers for many years.

I always prodded them to get a speech organized, and talked over the ideas with them, and then I used to rehearse them in delivery after the speech was finally done. I showed them how to handle their mortarboard, how to bow to the president or the chancellor or both, how to begin the salutation and so on, as well as all the regular speech coaching that you do for articulation, for changing pitch and changing tempo, and all the rest.

They were always very acceptable speeches, some far better than others, depending upon the students. Some of the students from which you expected the best kind of speech turned out to have an ordinary kind of presentation. Some of the others came up with something very lively and very unusual.

Riess: Who chose the topics?

Wilson: With the system of tryouts, they had already chosen a topic.

Riess: I thought you had announced what the topic was to be.

Wilson: No, no. We announced the sorts of subjects which were appropriate for commencement addresses. The students would pick one and very often the subject they chose just had to be amplified, because the trial speeches are only two minutes and then you had to amplify it to five minutes. That was the system.

Riess: You must have come up with a lot of future lawyers or people who had already been developing their speaking skills, or do you think it correlated differently with the population?

Wilson: One of the popular choices for student speaker back in 1952 was Les Richter, who had been a great football hero. Les had also been chairman of the California Club. He had been an officer of his

Wilson: living group. He had worked on many campus projects. Les was a very conscientious citizen. You think of a football player as being wrapped up only in football, but Les was the all-around man and he was a very popular choice, certainly with the newspapers.

Another popular choice was the year Ann Hawley was graduated. She was a student speaker in 1954. She had been a campus leader and a good student, and the man was a football player. Now he's the vice-chancellor for student affairs at Davis, Tom Dutton, Thomas P. Dutton. They were a popular choice because he had been not only a football player, but an all-around good student and an all-around good citizen and represented the clean-cut college boy who didn't believe in swearing on the football team and that sort of thing.

Riess: So you chose somebody who would reflect on the university well because this was a very amply covered affair by the press?

Wilson: Oh, yes, I should say so. We'd have huge crowds. An average crowd would be about twenty thousand people. Commencement is a chance to present the university at its best.

Riess: Right, and for the parents too.

Pi Kappa Alpha Advisor

Riess: Let's see, you were faculty advisor for Pi Kappa Alpha?

Wilson: [chuckles] Yes, fraternities in the 1950s had some of their best and most prosperous years. They were popular. The silent generation enjoyed belonging to such organizations and the university benignly watched over them--not enough, I think. But each fraternity had an alumnus advisor. (I just happened to be a faculty member and an alumnus advisor, but it was not because I was on the faculty. It was because I was around.)

The fraternity alumni advisors had an association too, and I was eventually president of that association for two or three years. The advisors did meet together and they did try to strengthen fraternities and try to keep them sound financially and try to keep them well-behaved and try to make them a real supportive influence for the university. Of course, the university has always been dependent on fraternities and sororities to provide housing for students. Long before the university undertook to provide any housing, the organized living groups were doing it.

Wilson: My regret has always been that the university did not lend enough support. Always the excuse was that the glory of our fraternities and our sororities is that they are independent and we are not mother-henning them. But, there were certain areas in which the university needed to help them: that is, to collect house bills. The perennial problem in a fraternity where brotherhood or sisterhood is paramount is somebody who gets into financial trouble and can't pay his house bill. Do you kick him out? No, you carry him. How long do you carry him? Popular people can pile up tremendous bills, tremendous debts. Then they might have to drop out of college and it may be years before they pay their bill, if anytime.

Now, in the university living groups (the residence halls and so on) a student cannot get his grades or register for another term until he is cleared financially. I always thought that the university should do that for sororities and fraternities. That wouldn't interfere with their own independence, their running themselves; it would just be an assistance to them. Then you could say to your delinquent members, "We're sorry. We can't do anything about it. It's a university rule. They won't give your grades or clear you for graduation or clear you for your transcript or anything until you settle this up."

Riess: The group of advisors thought it was too hard a line to take?

Wilson: No, they appealed to the university over and over again and nothing came of it.

Riess: What was the university trying to do? You say they wanted to foster their independence. Was it at the beginning of a movement where fraternities were--

Wilson: No, no. Actually, the truth was that during the fifties we had a dean of students here whose idea of avoiding trouble was not to take on any extra responsibilities. So he always kept out of it and that policy seems to have been carried over. When the disturbed sixties came and opinion was all against fraternities and sororities and when they started to go under, go bankrupt and sell their houses and so on, the university even then didn't take a firm stand and save these very good institutions that have been the source all through the years of student spirit, of student leadership, and student housing. We can't let them go under. But they did.

Riess: Was that a different dean of students or the same one?

Wilson: That was a different dean of students and he had so much on his hands that he didn't have time for fraternities. So they went by the wayside.

Riess: How about the parental chapters, the national chapters?

Wilson: In many cases they stepped in and tried to keep the groups alive and tried to support them financially. My own fraternity, Pi Kappa Alpha, was kept alive by the national office. It went through some crazy periods of having women live in the house. [laughter] Then the boys wanted to initiate women and this was when the national finally said, "You get rid of women in the house and stop this nonsense or we'll revoke the chapter's charter," and so they ejected the girls. But they managed to exist, and now in the late seventies prosperity has returned because our students now have spent their fury. [laughter] Fraternities and sororities are prospering, but I regret the fact that the old standards of dress and of conduct and of ideals seem to have vanished.

Riess: You spoke eloquently earlier about how they functioned in polishing the young man.

Wilson: That's right. For example, when I was an undergraduate here our breakfast was a pick-up breakfast, sort of buffet style. But we had our lunch served and our dinner served in a dining room by waiters who were students but from outside the fraternities. They wore white coats and served the table, removed the plates and so on, just as waiters do in a restaurant. The house president always presided and he had the authority to fine anybody who cursed at the table or who did something unacceptable. The house president was supported by the feeling of the majority of house members. There was a rules committee that dealt with serious infractions and we had, for example, room inspections once a week to be sure the rooms were clean. We had study tables and a tutoring system for the boys who needed tutoring and all sorts of things besides the social events.

Now when I'm invited to any fraternity dinner I am appalled at the conduct. Members themselves wait on table. They are not disciplined but sling the hash at you and slide the food down the tables, and it's boisterous. It's completely unstructured.

Riess: Is it the same population gone bad or is it simply a different population that has joined the fraternities?

Wilson: No, they come from the same families, but they are sharing the greater laxity in manners that permeates all society.

The sororities have maintained a good deal more semblance of order and manners and good behavior. I'm invited now and then to a sorority dinner and they're always beautifully dressed and the

Wilson: housemother is always the person of honor. That's one thing, the men's groups have never had housemothers, and they've never wanted housemothers. I think once or twice they disciplined one fraternity and made it take a housemother for a year so she could tame the boys. [laughter] There has been a slow erosion of the ideals and manners, just as in dress. It's a matter of interest to current students to realize that at one time there was a dress code for the women on the campus, subscribed to by the women and administered by the dean of women. The idea that you could have a dress code now is laughable.

Riess: In the late sixties, was there a kind of rebellion within the fraternities?

Wilson: Oh, yes, a lot of fraternity men joined the various movements and the various demonstrations and so on.

Riess: And then brought the message back to the fraternity?

Wilson: That's right and sometimes they used fraternity houses as rallying grounds for some of the demonstrations. It wasn't all non-fraternity people. There were fraternity and sorority people.

There was reason for some of the unrest. Of course, there were sound reasons for it, but I am not the sociologist to go into that. I was chapter advisor at Pi Kappa Alpha for eight years and then I had enough and dropped out.

Student Orientation

Riess: In 1956-57 you were on a student union committee of student orientation and counseling.

Wilson: I have a vague memory that that was a faculty committee to recommend how to improve the orientation that we gave incoming students. My only memory is that one of our recommendations was to have a one-unit orientation course which all new students had to take with a lecture once a week to acquaint them with different aspects of the university.

Riess: To be held in the late summer?

Wilson: No, to be held their first semester in the fall, a regular course. That didn't get off the ground at all. But now there is an elaborate orientation program where parents and students are

Wilson: brought to Berkeley all during the summer to visit the campus and listen to faculty people talk, listen to all kinds of informative information.

Riess: It's optional?

Wilson: Yes, it's optional, but it's quite popular and it's very well-attended.

Student Representation on Committees

Riess: What was the Sproul Hall Space Committee?

Wilson: That followed the old Berkeley idea of having no arbitrary decisions by administrators, but having faculty committees which make the choices. Even so minor a thing as office space in Sproul Hall was guided by a committee made up of various users with faculty members and staff people on it who surveyed the needs and then decided (sometimes painfully) that So-and-So would have to move because So-and-So needs the space more. I think that has been abandoned. I think it is an administrative decision now.

Riess: It's interesting that we are talking about students on committees and today it's an issue in the Daily Cal.

Wilson: My observation is (and it confirms what is reported today in the Daily Cal) that students think it is going to be exciting to be in on the decision process, but that there's nothing duller and slower than an academic committee. Yet I don't know any groups anyplace which are more conscientious and more aware of all of the conflicting issues and conflicting claims than a faculty committee. But it's a matter of very careful analysis, of compromise, and as I said last time, of listening to everybody say his piece.

Even though a chairman may know at the beginning what the outcome must be, or might sense it during the first ten or fifteen minutes of discussion, if he's a wise chairman he knows that certain people have to be heard, certain opinions have to be expressed, and then everybody will be happy when they reach the conclusion which a lot of people had sensed was going to be the conclusion right at the beginning of the meeting.

Riess: People have to unburden themselves of their opinion.

Wilson: It's a kind of a therapy, yes. It makes them feel, "I didn't get what I wanted, but I at least have had a chance to express my opinion and I have had a chance to persuade or attempt to persuade the committee, and so I have done all I can."

Riess: Are students on these committees given a chance to speak and persuade?

Wilson: Oh, yes, and sometimes they do, but more often they do not. During this past year we have had five students on the public ceremonies committee. Now that, remember, is an administrative committee appointed by the chancellor, not a committee of the Academic Senate, so it is somewhat different. Also, the Committee on Public Ceremonies doesn't often have new policy questions to discuss. The format for Charter Day is pretty well set. There can be as many variations and innovations as possible. The format for commencement is pretty well set. The format for the chancellor's reception has evolved over the years through trial and error.

When we have a meeting of the committee, say before the reception for new students, it's a question of going over last year's reports and notes and saying, "What went wrong? How can we improve it? Is this any longer the way we should do things?" Most of the public ceremonies committee is made up of veterans who have handled their own little job for years and years and they have long experience to draw upon while the students, probably new every year, sit there ga-ga, thinking, "What are we talking about?"

We have to explain to them the problem and very often, for example, we do stop and say, "We've had a problem of the new students getting in the elevator on the basement level of the student union and then zipping right up to the reception floor without going through any of the procedures. We must stop that and must have a guard on the garage level plus an elevator attendant who has been briefed not to allow new students to use the elevator. Only members of the committee who will be identified by their formal clothes may use the elevator." Anyway, for students, committees may be useful as a learning experience.

Riess: There is a certain tension and involvement for a committee member who has a point of view and is going to have it heard and who has a vote. But for a student whose vote is only reckoned but not really counted, I should think it would be a breeding place for discontent if not boredom.

Wilson: Yes, and there are confidential matters which you can't possibly allow students to participate in. The most delicate kind of discussion concerns appointments and whether you should promote somebody or retain him or fire him.

Students are at a stage where they think good teaching is the teaching which is entertaining and that may be the worst kind of teaching. There are various kinds of good teaching, and various kinds of students profit by one form or the other. These are the things that students don't really understand. You have to be around a long time to recognize that this guy, who you thought was a bad teacher, who made you grind away day after day until you hated him, now ten years later you find that he's the man you remember and his instruction is what you're using now.

Riess: Do you have students on the tenure committee?

Wilson: No, but this is one of the things that they would like to be on.

Then there are certain other questions of academic policy where student opinion is already known. For example, if you put students on a committee which is discussing additional requirements, their point of view need not be expressed because the faculty will be painfully aware of it; it would just be a nuisance to have students present.

Riess: If students wanted to bring up the issue of requirements, to look at a place like Harvard which is changing its requirements, and say, "Maybe this is something that would be good for Berkeley," there isn't now a forum--?

Wilson: Not that I know of, unless it is the student body president's council, which is embroiled in a great many other things. I think I mentioned last time though* on this so-called subcommittee when we discussed Zellerbach Hall, John Welborne was the student who was able to get the name of the Zellerbach Playhouse changed from theater to playhouse.

Riess: Why was that such an issue?

*See note on page 369. This material is from Interview 18.

Wilson: Simply because theater is such a broad term, and what is a theater? They were calling the whole complex an auditorium-theater, and did that refer to the big house or did it refer to both of them?

People also use the term theater to mean performance, as in the statement: "Oh, that was very good theater I saw last night." Well, what is meant? My own book is called, for the sake of clarity, Three Hundred Years of American Drama and Theater*, to differentiate the written drama from all of the activities that go on in a playhouse. To call a structure a playhouse or a movie house is far more specific and clear than to call it a theater.

I thought that the University of California should be willing to use clear terms, but I couldn't get my views accepted by the committee. Then John Welborne came on the committee and he did. He was a very diplomatic but persistent and persuasive young man--a remarkable lad. It didn't take him long. I think he went straight to the chancellor and the vice-chancellor until he got their okay, and then came back to the committee.

Riess: But you couldn't have done it that way.

Wilson: [laughter] No, I couldn't have done it that way. I couldn't go behind the back of the committee. Anyway, John was persuasive enough. I can't remember all of the things he did, but he got his way. So now we have Zellerbach Auditorium and Zellerbach Playhouse and nobody is confused about where to go. I like the term playhouse and I'm eternally grateful to John Welborne for doing what I couldn't do.

Riess: For working outside of the system.

Wilson: Yes. A footnote to history is that he is the man who studied the locked case which contained the Stanford ax in the Stanford student union. He studied all of the alarm systems and all of the security systems that surrounded it and figured out how they could be defeated to steal the ax.

Riess: That was the first time?

*Prentice-Hall, 1973.

- Wilson: In modern times. Today the ax is supposed to be a big game trophy and belongs to the campus which wins the big game. You are not supposed to steal it, but it has been stolen. Welborne was the one who designed the case in the Berkeley student union where the ax now rests this year, happily. Since he had figured out the flaws in the Stanford system I have confidence that we have a better system.
- Riess: Was this about ten years ago?
- Wilson: Not that long ago. I think he stole the ax about eight years ago.
- Riess: I was wondering if during the sixties people were basically too busy to "steal the ax."
- Wilson: Yes, most of them were too involved in world problems. But Welborne was a man who was involved in all problems and nothing was too important or too small to attract his attention and he picked and chose very well.

Planning for the Zellerbach Auditorium and the Playhouse

The Auditorium Theater Subcommittee

- Riess: The auditorium theater subcommittee sounds interesting. Were you working with the architect?
- Wilson: Yes, Vernon De Mars was the head man on that and he built various models which we looked at and talked about. The planning for the auditorium I remember distinctly. The original plan called for a large lower floor and a single balcony, but the program said that the auditorium should be designed so the speaking voice could be heard without amplification. It wasn't originally thought of as being a place for opera, symphony orchestra, and so on. They thought of Hertz Hall in terms of that. But they wanted a place for big plays to be heard without amplification.

We were very worried about acoustics because there had been so many mistakes made all over the United States. We heard that there was a theater consultant, an advisor, in New York City called Ben Schlanger. His fee was \$500 a day, which back in those days was a lot of money, but we decided we would import him and have him look

- Wilson: over both the model and the plans for the auditorium. I remember him meeting with the committee, a very competent person, genteel too. He listened to our hopes for the building and he said instantly, "You've got to squeeze it together. This present plan with only one balcony and large lower section--you can never project the human voice in a building that size. You've got to squeeze it together and have two balconies so the distance from the stage to the rear wall is a much shorter distance than you have here." So the architects went back to the drawing boards. They shortened the lower floor and put in another balcony. The consultant gave some other suggestions, various other good suggestions, and the acoustics turned out to be pretty darned good..
- Riess: How about materials? The baffles and the absorbancy of that material, did he have anything to say for or against that?
- Wilson: Sure, sure, he did. He advised us on materials for the walls, the upholstery of the seats and all that.

When the auditorium was dedicated, I enjoy recalling one of the things we did. When Chancellor Heyns took the stage and went to the lectern there was a public address system and he talked for a minute or two over the public address system, then he stepped away from it to the front of the lectern and continued to talk to demonstrate that he could still be heard.

Later it turned out that the use of the auditorium was different from what we had anticipated. It became more and more used for big musical productions and very rarely for plays and very rarely just for lectures. When there was a lecture, it was simple--the P.A. system was built in--to use a P.A. system or not use it. The musicians said, "Since the building is now used principally for big musical things, it should be retuned because the reverberation rate is too short." They felt it was a little dead. So the Zellerbachs, as I recall, gave \$75,000 to have the building retuned, to change some of the materials. I've forgotten what they did, but they did it to make it better for music, which had become the principal use. Now I don't hear any real criticism of it from the symphony or opera or whatever is given there, the big musical things.

- Riess: Your role was as a theater man?
- Wilson: I was both theater and public ceremonies.

One thing that the committee hassled over was whether there should be a porch, where you went up steps, an entry way, and then went into the auditorium. The late Donald Coney, who was

Wilson: the university librarian and a member of the committee, was against porches completely. He said, "It's ridiculous. Why do you put things on stilts so people have to walk up and then down in order to enter?"

[Interview 18: July 31, 1980]##*

Riess: We were talking about the idea of a porch. Are portico and porch the same?

Wilson: A raised dais; I don't know. I have always thought of a portico as having a covering over it, whereas a porch does not necessarily have a covering over it. [refers to dictionary] "A colonnade or covered ambulatory" is the definition of portico. Now, let's see also porch. Porch they give as "a covered entrance to a building, commonly enclosed in part, projecting out from the main wall and having a separate roof; obsolete, a portico, covered walk." So they are interchangeable. What I had in mind when I made the analogy with a Greek temple or a medieval cathedral was not "a covered ambulatory," but it was a raised space immediately in front of the building where large crowds could gather.

Riess: You were saying that the attraction of this was that it would make it multi-purpose.

Wilson: That's right. We were always pleased with how useful Dwinelle Hall became because it has steps leading up to a large space--a large porch, I'd call it--and when we had university meetings in the open there, it was a magnificent stage; it was a stage thrust out from the building. Vernon De Mars, who designed the student center plaza, had contemplated it would be a gathering place of large crowds for various things. We see now how much it's used for rock concerts at noon and we did use it for a university meeting there in 1968 before the whole building was dedicated. It was the last convocation of the centennial celebration.

*A technical problem resulted in the loss of the rest of Interview 17. Interview 18 is in large part a retelling of material discussed and lost because of the technical problem.

- Wilson: But the little porch they put on, which is covered by the balcony overhang, is not high enough in relation to the rest of the plaza to be used as a stage or a platform. So neither Donald Coney nor myself got what we wanted. I wanted a projecting platform which could be used as a stage with the rest of the plaza used as the auditorium. He wanted no steps at all. As it is, we now have two or three small steps going into the auditorium.
- Riess: I have read that Vernon De Mars visualized this area as functioning in the same way that the Piazza San Marco does, as a kind of great space with things opening onto it. At those meetings did he--
- Wilson: Oh, yes, he mentioned that, and we do have two eateries that open onto the plaza. Unfortunately, they are never open when there is an evening performance. [laughter]

Now it has become a popular place for throwing frisbees and for other activities which do not make for serenity and peace of mind. If you're sitting in the plaza or you're walking through and a frisbee comes flying through the air, you want to get out of the way. You don't want to linger, which is too bad. But that too will pass. [chuckles]

- Riess: I wouldn't predict frisbees passing for a very long time.
- Wilson: Sure, sure, I think they will, just like hula hoops. Nobody even knows what a hula hoop is anymore except the oldsters. I think frisbees will be forgotten. The craze will die down.

The Playhouse

- Riess: The two spaces of Zellerbach are the auditorium and the playhouse.
- Wilson: The auditorium was designed for large events where the speaking voice could be heard without amplification, and it's still used occasionally as that, but it has become more used as a place for large musical events, symphony and opera.

The playhouse was designed to be the laboratory for the department of dramatic art. They wanted to make it as flexible as possible, so that plays written for different forms of theater could be done there. If you have a fixed proscenium stage, that is delightful for 19th century drama which is written for that kind of theater. But if you're going to do a Greek play, you don't want a peephole stage. They were done almost as a theater in the round.

- Wilson: Anyway, the Zellerbach Playhouse has continental seating: one unbroken bank of seats going from one level to the top level, with space between rows wide enough so you don't have to have aisles. It's designed so the proscenium opening is just about as wide as the auditorium, so you can have as big an opening as you need, or it can be trimmed down with drapes and screens. You have a fore-stage which can be raised or lowered to make a thrust stage. This requires removing several rows of seats. You can also make a theater in the round by actually putting spectators up on the stage so the central acting area--the forestage--is surrounded on four sides by people.
- Riess: I was on that stage for one of the most extraordinary productions in my entire life, The Ik. It was based on Mountain People, the book by Colin Turnbull.
- Wilson: I must have been away. I don't remember that.
- Riess: There were actors "throwing up" on stage; I was on stage with them; it was extraordinary. It was an international theater company. I'm sorry you were not there!
- Wilson: Well, I am aware of that kind of production because that is one of the developments of the last twenty years, theater that shocks you, that lures you into participation, and gives you the feeling that you are a part of the action. The aim is to give you a visceral reaction, not just a mental or emotional reaction.
- Riess: The actors were asked to talk about it afterwards.
- Wilson: You, the audience, were part of the experience, the whole happening.
- Riess: That building was designed by the theater arts people on campus?
- Wilson: Yes, they worked with the architect very carefully and brought in all kinds of advisors too, especially in designing the lighting equipment, which, incidentally, is already a little old-fashioned. The development in stage lighting, computerized and electronically controlled, has been so rapid that even though our playhouse is only eleven years old, now much of the equipment is outdated. I wouldn't say obsolete; it's used, but it's outdated because that area in theater technique has moved so rapidly.

It's wired beautifully, I think, as we mentioned last time, so that the stage manager for a regular play is on stage right and in complete communication with all of the dressing rooms, with all of the lighting and sound people, with everybody, and he runs the show. He gives the cues for everybody and he warns all of the actors when it's time for them to be ready for their entrances. Formerly,

Wilson: actors were warned by a call boy, running around and knocking and saying, "Half an hour, suh," and then, "Five minutes, suh," then, "Places." That has gone by the boards because you have a public address system.

However, there is a flaw and I almost got caught in it. You can turn off the P.A. system in your own dressing room. I was reading in mine, figuring I had a lot of time, and I had turned off the P.A. system so I could concentrate on my reading. Suddenly, the assistant stage manager burst in and said, "You're on stage in a minute. Get there, get there! What's the matter? Why didn't you hear the call?" I said, "I'm sorry, I turned off the public address system." [laughter]

Riess: As an actor you were down there reading something else entirely? You weren't just getting in the mood?

Wilson: No, no, I wasn't getting in the mood. The Old Chestnut plays didn't demand that kind of "method" acting really. You knew your lines and projected them and had fun doing it.

Riess: Those plays used a lot of the special equipment.

Wilson: The stage also is trapped; that is, there are holes in the floor where you can descend, and we used the trap very effectively in a couple of plays I was in. High Tor, Maxwell Anderson's play, was set on a high hill and we made our entrances through a trap, this trap being hidden by a low profile of bushes. You came slowly up a ladder through the trap to give the illusion you were mounting the hill, as it were.

Also, the traps were used in The Spider, the murder-mystery play where the magician had various people disappear. He would put a young lady in a casket, start thrusting swords through it, and then lift up the casket and she was gone. There was no apparent way she could disappear except the casket was placed over one of the traps. They just opened the trap and she descended to the basement and then they closed it again and it looked like a flat stage floor.

Riess: Has that playhouse developed traditions and jinxes?

'High Tor' reviewed

The professors know how to act

One thing that was proven by The Old Chestnut Drama Guild's closing production of the season — professors of theatre at the University of California here do know a little something about the art of acting.

Featured in Maxwell Anderson's "High Tor" were Professor Garff B. Wilson, Professor George House, (director of "The Vegetable") and Professor William I. Oliver (director of half the season).

Oliver's brief appearance in the final act was loaded with funny lines and funny delivery. His reaction when he learns that his business opponent has an iron clad advantage was particularly well-played.

House and Wilson are cast as a couple of wheeler-dealers who would cheat anybody, even each other. Their characterizations were well-developed within the limitations of Anderson's script. Their dialogue scenes were played with the comedic timing of a top vaudeville team.

"High Tor" differs from the other plays of the Old Chestnut season, in that it was first produced in 1937. All the others were from the 1920's. Also, this is one of the few light pieces by Maxwell Anderson.

John Warren Tyson is again outstanding as the nonconformist who would rather live off the mountain land than sell his property to a gravel company. This

mountain is haunted by some Dutch ghosts who have been hanging around for some two hundred years. Of this group, Cory Bihr shows us his best work of the season in a speech expounding on the worship of money.

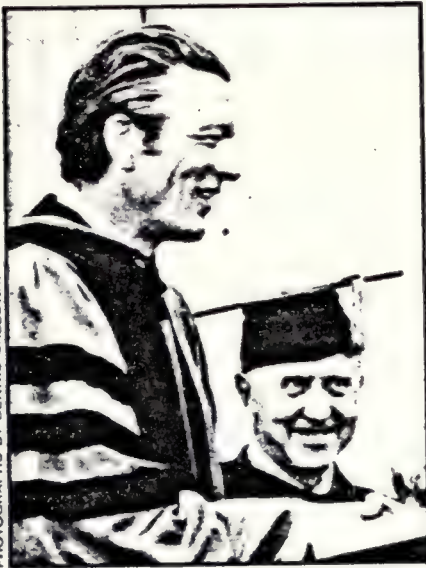
As the sole female of the gang of ghosts, Jan Lewis had a mystic quality and an inconsistent accent. Unevenness in dialect is bad enough, but overdoing it sparks of amateurism, and the gentlemen portraying the state troopers and the bank robbers played as if they were the Dead End Kids cast in "West Side Story."

This play offered many challenges to lighting director Henry May, who was most effective in creating the transition from reality to fantasy, and in subtly lighting the scenes where the two met. His sets have been consistently creative and one of the high points of the entire season. "High Tor" requires a steam shovel that works; May put one on stage, and it works.

Looking over the past six weeks at the Zellerbach Playhouse, "Fallen Angels" emerges as the best production, followed by "Rain." This was the first season of The Old Chestnut Drama Guild. It is sincerely hoped that they will be back for the summer of '76.

—TOM WINSTON

Garff Wilson



PHOTOGRAPHS BY DENNIS GALLOWAY

There he lay on the steps of Zellerbach's stage, his (imitation) life's blood seeping out between his fingers. Minutes before he had been manhandling a magician and arguing with a pretty girl. Not what you'd expect from a professor emeritus, but then, the unexpected has always been the hallmark of the irrepressible Garff B. (for Bell) Wilson.

First the wide-eyed freshman from Ogden, Utah, home of his pioneering Mormon grandparents. Next the nimble-witted, quick-worded debate champion of the Class of '31. Then an M.A. from Cal, five years teaching at Humboldt State, three years at Cornell for the Ph.D. and back to Berkeley in 1941 as a faculty member, only to be drafted for duty in Europe and Asia. Capt. Wilson returned to Berkeley and was soon into the role in which thousands have known him (and other hundreds of thousands have seen him without knowing it). Asked to invigorate a tepid reception for new students, he produced a triumph and within months was named to head Public Ceremonies. That began nearly 30 years as impresario of Cal's formal events (and some informal ones, too), displaying a deft showmanship that

California Monthly, October 1976

[Photo: Garff Wilson with Mayor John V. Lindsay of New York City, Charter Day ceremonies, 1976]

drew capacity audiences and usually saved the few marginal performers who slipped by his judgment ("What phone booth do we hold Charter Day in," he once growled when confronted with a surprise unknown). Kings, queens, presidents and prime ministers ("Thanks to them, I learned not to fear headwaiters") starred in public ceremonies directed by Wilson along with the 50,000 graduates who marched in commencements in Memorial Stadium prior to 1970. A careful planner who always walked the territory before an event, he was at his best adding music or humor to an otherwise solemn event, and enjoyed his own rare missteps (brushing aside Sweden's king for the more regal-looking ambassador). Unabashedly in love with his alma mater, he became a part of its traditions with his "Tribute to Andy Smith" at Big Game rallies for

26 years, and added to it "Salute to California Football" at the annual grid banquet. In Speech and Dramatic Art classes, when he impersonated the stentorian tones of President Sproul, as he read "The Christmas Carole" in the Student Union, when he called forth memories of Cal to gathered alumni, in his books on the American theater, he made clear his delight in the human drama.

Two months ago, as professor emeritus, he was back on stage, an actor in Berkeley's summer stock company, the Old Chestnut Drama Guild. And, because Chancellor Bowker has recalled him to continue as his Special Assistant for Public Ceremonies, at Charter Day and other events, he continues to be (in his words) "the unidentified man on the right."



Andrew Cohn, John Thompson, Arthur Feinsod, Garff Wilson, George House, in "High Tor," Old Chestnut Drama Guild, UC Berkeley, Summer 1975.



Garff Wilson with Robert Frost (the poet) and Bill Henders (friend of Wilson), March 1947.

Wilson: No, except the usual superstitions are there. You know that an actor, if he wants to wish somebody good luck before an opening, says, "Break a leg." That is the traditional saying. "Break a leg, break a leg." It sounds as though you are wishing him ill luck, but it has come to mean exactly the opposite.

Riess: What about the tradition of the green room?

Wilson: Yes, there is an official green room located between the auditorium and the playhouse. It has a separate entrance off the north side and then there is a star's dressing room just off that which has its own toilet and shower facilities. At times, I guess, productions in the auditorium use that, but nobody in the playhouse uses it because it's too far away.

The young student actors in the playhouse have taken over one of the dressing rooms on the lower level and filled it with junky old furniture, an electric coffee pot, and an old junky refrigerator, and that's where they go when they have a little time between scenes. They can hear the performance in progress, because if you leave on the P.A. system in any dressing room, every word from the stage can be heard. So you know exactly how close they are to your scene. Unless you turn it off and get lost in the book you are reading, you will be on time! [laughter]

Riess: Theater history: the green room has been with us since when?

Wilson: I don't know exactly. My first acquaintance with it was five years ago now, during the first season of the Old Chestnut Drama Guild, but they probably developed it very early with the first play or two, the first year.

Riess: Yes, but I'm thinking--

Wilson: In terms of theatrical history?

Riess: Yes.

Wilson: Oh, so far as I know there has always been a green room or its equivalent. I can't think of any in the classical Greek theater, although there certainly had to be backstage areas where the actors could gather and wait for their entrances. Certainly, there were retiring rooms and places in the Elizabethan theater.

Riess: Green?

Wilson: I don't know where that came in. I should know. I think I looked it up once. I think it was because the first such retiring rooms happened to be painted green.

Wilson: Now, if you asked me where the term "box office" comes from, it came from the early colonial playhouses in the U.S.A. It was the bureau where you went to get seats in a box because only the boxes could be reserved ahead of time. With the general admission tickets, it was "first come, first served." But there was an office where you could go and buy seats for a box and that became known as the box office. Now that all seats are reserved, we still keep the term "box office."

Riess: You say the lighting is already somewhat obsolete. Was the effort to spare no expense originally?

Wilson: Oh, yes, and to have the very latest and the very best--the latest and the best--but it's just like automobiles and so on. They get obsolete.

Coming Up To Date

Relinquishing Power; Sproul

Riess: Last week before the tape recorder did its dirty work I commented that Kerr saw his role as mediator and negotiator, and you said that Sproul's view was that his role was to know everything, have a hand in everything, the omniscient president.

Wilson: That's right. The modern president who has the task of overseeing nine campuses does not have the immediate task of keeping students happy on any particular campus or of evaluating department performance on any particular campus or surveying the grounds to see if they're being watered and pruned and so on.

Sproul grew up as a one-campus president and then became a two-campus president and then more than that, and he was gradually changing. It was under him that the chancellor system was inaugurated in 1952 and he delegated lots of authority to the individual campus heads. When Kerr became president it was an entirely different job from what Sproul had been used to, and to mediate, to coordinate, to be the umpire, that was quite logical.

Riess: Some of the people who worked under Sproul, some of the provosts, I guess, before they were given the title of chancellor--administrative men from UCLA, Provosts Hedrick and Dykstra--those were men who were chafing all the time apparently.

Wilson: That's right.

Riess: I wonder whether Kerr was chafing under Sproul.

Wilson: Somewhat. I knew that.

Your question reminds me of a session I had with Professor Kerr before he became chancellor. He had called me in at one point and said that he was accepting the newly established chancellorship on the Berkeley campus and would I be on his staff as well as on Sproul's staff. Well, what do you do? [chuckles] You say yes. Then he called me in and said, "I'm not going to take that job because Dr. Sproul refuses to relinquish certain powers which I think I must have if I am going to be an effective chancellor."

Apparently, before Kerr ever accepted the job there had been controversy over which powers he should have and which powers should remain with the president. This you could understand because Sproul was trained in a different system and I think that's the reason why every faculty conference I attended where Sproul was presiding that question would come up: "Why don't you delegate more responsibility? Why do you insist upon keeping this power to yourself?" He made the statement a couple of times, "My concept of the presidency requires me to know about these things. If I don't know and if things go awry, then I'll get the blame without having known what was brewing." He was thinking of the whole university in terms of one campus.

Riess: That's very interesting because it's the kind of heroics that nobody wanted.

Wilson: That's right. So he gradually relinquished the power and when Kerr became president--

Riess: You mean this was brought up at the All-University Faculty Conferences, brought up out of discussion from the floor?

Wilson: He always had an open question period, although usually you submitted questions in writing so he could prepare himself; it might demand certain facts and figures and history which he didn't have at his fingertips, and if he wanted to give a complete and authoritative answer he would like to know ahead of time and so prepare himself, he said. However, there was this question period. I am positive I heard him discuss the question two or three times, but always with that feeling.

Riess: It sounds like what he didn't understand was that that reflected disgruntlement. He probably thought that reflected admiration, which he was more used to hearing.

Wilson: Yes.

Riess: Because the other part of the chancellors' chafing under this domination of Sproul is that their faculty were unable to get anything from their own chancellors because the chancellors couldn't do anything.

Changes; Chancellor Bowker

Wilson: Now I think that 95 percent or more of the authority is with the chancellor. I'm not up on exactly what powers the president reserves for himself, but certainly everything in the way of appointments and promotions and dismissals and department re-organizations is now the authority of the chancellor.

I just heard today that our new chancellor is establishing at least two new vice-chancellorships. Remember, under Heyns there were about five vice-chancellors.

Riess: I don't remember that.

Wilson: Oh, yes, there was a vice-chancellor for student affairs, there was a vice-chancellor for research, there was a vice-chancellor for business affairs, there was the academic vice-chancellor, and so on.

Riess: Then under Bowker--

Wilson: Under Bowker there were just two vice-chancellors, plus two provosts. Now Chancellor Heyman is going to have an executive, a number-one vice-chancellor, which is the old job he held. He is going to have the old chancellor for business affairs, Bob Kerley. He is going to have a vice-chancellor for student affairs and educational development on the undergraduate level, and he's going to have a vice-chancellor for research and overall academic planning and development, and that's all that I know so far.

Riess: He's going to have these positions because he has four men that he thinks would be good for those positions, or did he create the positions?

Wilson: No, he has had to search for the people.

Wilson: I think the impulse is to give more personal supervision and attention to more units. If you have twelve units reporting to one dean, you don't get nearly as much attention as if you have six units each reporting to its own dean or three units each reporting to his own dean or working with his own dean. (I shouldn't use the term "reporting to" but "working with.") Problems can receive immediate attention and there can be dreaming of the future and conferences on innovative ideas: "How can we do things better? How can we do things in a more exciting way for the students?" And so on.

If the administration is the wrong kind of administration bogged down in paperwork or if it is too remote, then these things don't get done. This multiplying of V.I.P.s in the administration I hope will be to have them very much attuned to the units they work with and accessible to them and accessible to students that are in those units and so on, to make the university a smaller and more personalized place.

Riess: The chancellor can make his own administrative set-up on each campus?

Wilson: Yes, I'm sure he confers with the president and I'm sure it's okayed by the regents just as it would be if we were a single campus. But I'm sure it's the custom to accept the recommendation of the chancellor.

Riess: When Bowker in his time got rid of thirty-five administrators, I take it they were not V.I.P. level at all.

Wilson: No, they were middle level.

Riess: I read the interview with Bowker in Cal Monthly, about what he thought he had done.* It was interesting to me that he felt that his first order of business was to get Berkeley some favorable publicity, that in early 1970 students were not coming here as much, that they couldn't even fill the dormitories.

*California Monthly, June-July 1980, Vol. 90, No. 6, p.1.

Wilson: Well, there were enough students, the enrollment didn't go down, but we were accepting all of the qualified students who applied in order to keep the enrollment up.

The students then chose not to live in the dormitories or in the fraternities or sororities. It wasn't fashionable. They didn't like regimentation. They wanted their own communes and little apartments and private homes and so on. But that turned around completely. As you know from the interview with Bowker, we are now the most popular campus in the university system and literally redirect thousands of students to the other campuses or just don't admit them.

Riess: My feeling had been that Bowker was implementing more affirmative acceptance of students; we were accepting everybody here at Berkeley because we wanted to have more minority people. But you are saying that we were accepting everybody that was qualified because there was such a drop-off in applications.

Wilson: That is what I have heard Bowker say. At the time I was not aware. My impression had always been that Berkeley has been an exceedingly popular place and that we couldn't take care of all of the students who wanted to be admitted. But Bowker certainly knew more about it than I did. If he saw that we were holding our own in enrollment by accepting all the qualified students--I was aware that he knew in Sacramento our image had to be changed, our relations had to be improved, and he made that one of his first priorities, making himself available all of the time.

He worked in a quiet and subtle way and thus only gradually did I become aware, even though I was fairly close to him both personally and in a lot of affairs, that the popularity of Berkeley was changing and increasing, and I started to hear him say that, oh, he had had phone calls from half a dozen alumni who were very much upset because their son or daughter had been redirected to some other campus. Or he would say, "Now, I have had a phone call from this good friend of mine who wants me to see if So-and-So and So-and-So can't be squeezed into Berkeley campus because for various reasons he would like very much to see them here." Bowker did his best to accommodate those who were qualified.

He was also open-minded about the gifted students. I don't know whether we have mentioned this before. There was a little incident which I am happy to be able to report. A good friend of a friend of mine came fairly late in the summer wanting to get into Cal and into dramatic art. He was a boy who had graduated from the American Academy of Dramatic Art, a gifted young actor, but he didn't have the proper entrance requirements.

Riess: A graduate?

Wilson: No, an undergraduate. But he was older, having been in New York for some time. Now, I happen to know that we have a provision--exceptions--for gifted students. It was originally put in for students who, say, were gifted in music and didn't have the standard requirements, but were smart enough to make them up, or a gifted science student in chemistry or physics or something else. This was put in the whole university system and our sister campus in the south immediately saw it as a way to get gifted athletes in [chuckles] and that's the way they started to use it. Now, all of the campuses are using it for that, too. But it's also available for the student of the first type.

Here was this gifted young actor who wanted to get into Berkeley. I stuck my neck out and went to Chancellor Bowker and explained, and he said, "Let's let him in. I'll tell the admissions director." He did. Well, the lad was here all that year and then he was here for what was the first season of Old Chestnut. In that first season we did a play by F. Scott Fitzgerald. It was not a successful play. But the Bowkers were great theater fans and they went to all the plays. This play had a part in it for a young man who had to sing, who had to dance, who had to act.

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Wilson: After the Bowkers saw the performance, Chancellor Bowker said to me, "Hmm, kind of a crummy play, wasn't it?" I said, "Yes, it was." He said, "The only good thing was that one young man. My, he was versatile. He seemed to be able to do anything. Who is he?" I had the immense satisfaction of saying, "Chancellor, that is the gifted young actor you admitted a year ago on my recommendation!" [laughter] Then he said, "Well, we didn't do too badly, did we?" [laughter] So that was just a sideline on redirecting students to other campuses.

A year ago, didn't Berkeley help out the enrollment at Santa Cruz by offering two thousand entering freshmen the proposition that if they would go to Santa Cruz instead of Berkeley, we would guarantee them admission on the Berkeley campus as juniors? I understand only a few hundred took up that offer, but it certainly shows the relative change in popularity. It's not due entirely to Bowker. It's due to the whole Berkeley campus working to improve and change its image, and it's due to the fact that conditions in the country have changed too. We're tired of the protests of the late sixties and early seventies and we're taking a breather now.

Riess: Yes, and of all the campuses this has the most serious purpose, most seriously academic?

Wilson: I believe so.

Riess: The one to graduate from.

Wilson: That's right, and the place where, as transfer students often will tell you if they want to be frank and honest, it's much tougher than at their previous campus. The competition and the dedication and the seriousness of our students in their own disciplines is much different.

Riess: I don't think we have to go into all of the other things which must be a matter of record that Bowker did. He removed a few schools and did some reorganizational things.

I remember you said that Chancellor Heyns felt he had used up his goodwill. I think it's interesting that someone with endless quantities of goodwill--that there is a limit to the kind of dealings you can have with somebody on the basis of being agreeable.

Wilson: That was the term that Heyns himself used. I wouldn't have used it, but he used the term and he thought that with the regents and with many other people, he had used up his goodwill. He was not being listened to anymore. I don't think they disliked him; maybe he should have said he used up his effectiveness. He felt he could no longer persuade and have them listen sympathetically to proposals he made, to new ideas he had. He felt that lack of effectiveness was such that it would not be right for the campus to have him continue. It was time for a new man.

The Development Office

Riess: A chancellor does have still to be effective in Sacramento. Does each chancellor have a relationship with Sacramento that is separate from the president's relationship with Sacramento?

Wilson: Yes, sure, and he has to have informal relations. He has to be always on hand if there is a committee that wants him to testify or wants him to supply information. He has to be present at certain social functions, and whatnot. It's a tremendous and complex web of relationships that you have to establish and have to keep flexible and keep beautiful.

Riess: We were marveling last time at how much of the social thing the Bowkers did. In his interview, Chancellor Bowker said that and fund raising were important activities since he had been here.

Riess: I asked you last week about the changes in the administrative setup in relation to the development office. "Gifts and endowments" was the original name of that?

Wilson: Yes, and it was right here next door and it was quiescent, small and quiet. Then when Bowker came in and made the changes, it became so busy and so crowded that they had to find new larger space. They moved over to what we call Northgate Hall. Older alumni would remember it as the architecture building or "the Ark." They have spacious quarters over there and instead of either amateurs or staff members who are just learning the business, Bowker, through Dick Erickson, brought in men who had been trained and had experience.

Evidently there is a real profession of fund raising and it has all kinds of techniques and angles that you would never suspect. For example, I once said to a professional fund raiser, "Why do you send so many appeals out in December? I think that would be the hardest time in the world to raise money because December is the time when everybody has the heaviest expenses." "On the contrary, everybody is more open-hearted in December than any other month of the year," he said. "This is the time when we can get money even with all those additional expenses because then goodwill is foremost in people's minds."

Riess: I'd like to propose that the guilt that people have about the excess of the money they are spending on material goods inspires a little something else! [laughter]

Wilson: Yes. But anyway, that's only a minor example of the professional approach.

Riess: Was City University of New York a private institution?

Wilson: No, that is supported by the city of New York. It is tax-supported.

Riess: He hadn't come from a place where this kind of effort was called for, and yet as soon as he got here he realized that he needed private support.

Wilson: That's right. I don't know what the situation was back there as far as fund raising. They may have had a development office back there, but certainly he had been acquainted with it when he was a dean at Stanford. He was very well-informed on what was happening all over the country. He was on the board at Bennington, I think. He was on the board of the University of Haifa. He has been on the boards of several educational institutions and I am sure that fund raising is important every place.

Riess: Among the professional touches, you were saying that the development office practically coaches the chancellor when he's going someplace, getting him lined up to come back with something.

Wilson: That's right. When they have two or three prospective donors in a big city anyplace and the prospects for getting them deeply involved are pretty good, then they'll ask the chancellor to be the host at a private dinner or a private luncheon or something, where they can talk about these things and where he can lend his prestige.

Riess: It would be likely to be alumni in this case?

Wilson: Yes, but sometimes foundation heads too where they have to be open-minded about all kinds of appeals. We certainly tap our alumni, but then there are hundreds of foundations that are in the business of giving money.

Riess: It must have been very hard to talk foundations into giving money to "crazy Berkeley."

Wilson: But sometimes, and I hope most often, the foundations are run by ex-academic people and ex-heads of the universities who understand that "crazy Berkeley" was being maligned when that term was used. Crazy Berkeley had retained its very high academic standing and had gone through a traumatic experience and maybe needed help.

Riess: It must be hard to be in a position of having to raise money and not cast aspersions on the state and governor and so on.

Wilson: I think that one of the big re-educational projects concerned our own alumni, because in the "palmy days" of Governor Earl Warren and during the war when the state had accumulated this tremendous surplus, the university didn't have to worry about private gifts. The tradition with the state was to be very generous with the state university. So our alumni had just assumed that the state always took care of us in a very healthy fashion.

But those years ended and as society became more complex and there was always the demand for welfare, and as the community colleges developed and the state colleges became universities and so on, the demand for money from the state became overwhelming. We had to compete with lots of other legitimate interests for money from the state. That meant that we had to take less than we were accustomed to taking and we had to cut down. To make up for that, we started to re-educate our alumni to see that "even a great oak needs nourishment" and we're not getting the nourishment without their help. We tell them that the margin of excellence now depends upon private giving because we can't hope to remain among the top

Wilson: two or three universities in the country unless we can maintain this margin of excellence which depends upon their money, their gifts. I believe that is getting across.

I think now the number of alumni who are willing to accept this situation and willing to work and willing to contribute has gone up tremendously. I think that the twenty-two or twenty-four million that was raised last year came from around six thousand or more donors, not from just a few rich people. That means the alumni now are starting to realize that public money is limited. This is right. This is what I say when I go out and give speeches. We can't expect the kind of support we used to get from the legislature.

Riess: Now that the university is more successful in raising money, \$23 million a year, what has been added? Bells, buildings, academic chairs?

Wilson: Well, the Bechtel Center is entirely private money. The rehabilitation of Hearst Gymnasium which is going on right now comes from the Hearst Foundation. The redoing of all of the offices of inter-collegiate athletics, that was private money, from an anonymous donor. The whole student center, with the exception of the dining commons (some state money went into that), the student union, Eshleman Hall and Zellerbach Hall, all came from donations and from loans.

Riess: Chancellor Bowker in that interview was ruing the fact that with all of this he hadn't been able to initiate major new buildings on campus.

Wilson: That's right. It slacked off when the student center came into being before Bowker got here. The new optometry building, that came, but the optometrists are very loyal and some of them make a good deal of money. I'm not sure how much state money, if any, went into that. I think it was mostly private money which they raised.

One area to which Bowker devoted a lot of money was establishing chairs or fattening salaries so we could keep our distinguished men. The technique now if a man has an endowed chair is not to give him all of his salary from the endowment. If you say, "We are going to do away with Professor McGillicuddy's position and move him to an endowed chair," then the state will stop funding the original position. That happened and that taught us a lesson. Now you use the money from the endowment to increase his salary.

If Harvard says to him, "How much are you getting at UC Berkeley?" and he says, "Thirty thousand," Harvard says, "We'll give you forty thousand." Then Mr. Bowker can step in and say, "We'll give you forty-two," because he has some endowment money there that can be used for that.

- Wilson: I'm sure a good deal of the money has gone to academic positions because that was one of the very dangerous situations we were facing, losing our best people to fat salaries every place and not necessarily to distinguished institutions. Often a very minor institution would say, "We'd like a big name in this department. Will you, Mr. Nobel Prize Winner, allow us to list you in our physics department? You need come only for a month during the whole year and give five lectures and we'll list you as a distinguished professor of physics at our institution." Sure, they'd gradually lure people away that way. So we have to be on the alert and we have to have off-scale salaries in order to try to keep our stars.
- Riess: Speaking of money, a couple of fund-raising associations developed here rather recently, the Robert Gordon Sproul Associates and the Chancellor's Circle.
- Wilson: Yes, that is the latest thing, to give people recognition who are major donors and have pledged to continue to be major donors. You put them in an elite group.
- Riess: Are they given the feeling that they are, in fact, in the chancellor's circle; do they become advisors in any way, people with influence?
- Wilson: They will have access to the chancellor anytime they want; they will be invited to certain social functions during the year where the chancellor will make a report, often a report on inside information, inside problems, and ask their advice and their help. Yes, I've heard him do that. I'm sure each chancellor will use these groups in his own fashion. They're fairly new, you see, and really developed during Chancellor Bowker's tenure. How Chancellor Heyman uses them and how much he develops them remains to be seen.
- Riess: In the old days, people like Crocker and Moffitt and McEnerney and Dickson and Pauley--the regents--were in a way the president's circle when things were going well, it seems to me, and really were major donors. Are regents like that anymore?
- Wilson: [chuckles] No.
- Riess: A man like Gene Trefethen in the old days--
- Wilson: Would have been a regent, that's right. Men like Rudolph Peterson, ex-president of the Bank of America, would have been regents and so on. But now we have a different administration in the state of California. [laughter]

Wilson: Those [regents named above] were not only the wealthy men who donated money, but they had this noble view of their job as regents, to be the defender, the interpreter, the shield; that the general public can't be expected to understand the peculiar nature of the university. They were the ones who understood it and who were responsible for making the public aware of it and shielding the university from public outcry and from legislative outcry too. But that doesn't seem to be the case any longer, unfortunately.

Riess: How about the powers of the Chancellor's Circle?

Wilson: They would have a way, if needed, of exerting influence in a just cause where it would be important, yes, I'm sure.

Openings, Unveilings

Riess: When were the plaques put back on Sather Gate? Was there an occasion?

Wilson: No.

Riess: How about telling me how they slipped back up there.

Wilson: I don't know for sure. My assumption is that quiet, knowledgeable Chancellor Bowker, having read the stuff in the newspaper, having gotten them back, just said, "Let's install them. Let's do it and not have any fanfare about it. The people will start noticing that the old marble plaques which belonged there are back there." I was pleasantly surprised when I saw them. That's the Bowker technique and he turned out to be right, and there has not been an outcry. "The new students will assume they have always been there."

Riess: And was there a dedication of Ludwig's Fountain when it was so named?

Wilson: There was a little ceremony. The late Bill Ellsworth, a dedicated member of Cal Band--he became their announcer and he died of cancer about five years ago--and a minor salaried employee of the ASUC, was the one who saw to it that there was a plaque and a dedication. There was a little gathering at the fountain. As I recall, Bill Ellsworth gave a little bit of the history. Then it seems to me that Don McLaughlin was there because McLaughlin was chairman of the regents when it was decided it should be named Ludwig's Fountain (they all chuckled over this idea but liked the idea).

- Wilson: The story goes that when McLaughlin called for the vote he said, "All those in favor of the motion, say woof!" [laughter] All the regents woofed and we got Ludwig's Fountain.
- Riess: For the opening of the University Art Museum I know there was a great series of dedications. Were you involved in that?
- Wilson: Oh, yes, indeed. Peter Selz was the one who was the driving power. There was first a ground breaking. They invited everybody who wanted to participate in the ground breaking to bring his own shovel and start digging. They had a man there with a great vat of gas--what do they fill balloons with?
- Riess: Helium.
- Wilson: Yes, he filled hundreds with helium to give to everybody and then they were released and floated to the sky. Balloons make a good impression! There were regular speeches and then there was an official shovel which was supplied by grounds and buildings and painted blue and gold, gold mostly, with ribbons on it, and then all the V.I.P.s took turns sinking the shovel into the ground. It was a very happy affair. Peter Selz wanted it to be a party and people brought food and they brought wine and so on and scattered all over the location and enjoyed themselves.

The museum was a long time in building, and the official dedication was carefully planned. The building was to be completely closed and the dedication was held outside on one of the terraces. At the end of the ceremony, the plan was to have the band march, leading the V.I.P.s, from the upper terrace down to the Durant entrance, cut a ribbon there, and then open the whole museum to the public. It had been so well-publicized [laughter] and so well-advertised that the mob was tremendous with wall-to-wall bodies every place. The Cal Marching Band on the upper terrace played Moussorgsky's Pictures at an Exhibition as one of their numbers. [chuckles] The right speeches were made and then the band tried to lead the V.I.P.s, the platform party, down to the entrance.

Impossible! You couldn't get through the crowd. Somehow a few V.I.P.s forced a way through the crowd (it wasn't the grand promenade which had been contemplated), opened the door, and then the mob just poured into the museum. It was practically unmanageable and a little frightening at times. But everything settled down and the crowd oohed and aahed over the building and all of the exhibitions that were there. There was no problem getting a crowd on that occasion. It was almost too popular.

Wilson: I have a little tiny footnote to that. Two of my dearest friends, who are former students of mine, Diane Carr and Richard Hathcock, invited me to their wedding. (I was the only one outside of the family.) It was given at a lovely home in San Jose, on the road going up to Mt. Hamilton, belonging to very close friends of the family, the Townsends. I attended the wedding and I met the Townsends and I found them delightful people and then I completely forgot about them.

When the art museum was to be dedicated I said to Peter Selz, "How in the world are you going to do all of these elaborate things and get all of these exhibits here?" "Oh," he said, "we have a private donation from some very modest donors, the Townsends." It didn't ring a bell with me at all. He said, "Both Doreen Townsend and her husband, Calvin, are graduates of Cal, and they are very good friends of the campus but never want any credit for it." I said, "My goodness, I'd like to know people like that."

In the middle of the open house following the dedication speeches, I saw Joe Mixer, who was then head of gifts and endowments, leading over this couple, and I didn't recognize them. As I got close, the man said to me, "Garff Wilson, we asked especially to see you today." Joe said, "You remember the Townsends, don't you? You were at the wedding of Dick and Deedee Hathcock." Then a great light dawned. For heaven's sake, I had known these people and they had asked [for me] especially! I said, "We're so grateful to you for making this day possible." "We don't want that mentioned," they said. But that is the footnote.

Sproul Plaza People

Riess: That's a very nice kind of thing to get into the oral history too.

What is the feeling from your perch here in Sproul Hall about Sproul Plaza these days? It's not a political place anymore, but it is still a little bit crazy.

Wilson: It is, and my feeling is a little tinge of old-fashioned worry because it may misrepresent the university, but also there is the new-fashioned idea that it is a colorful, jolly place and alumni and the general public should realize that it now represents an open forum, a Hyde Park, where anybody can do his thing within limits. They should know that you can't have a nudist celebration out there, for example; I'm sure the police would immediately take out blankets and bundle them up.

Riess: But you can have loud singing and loud ranting.

Wilson: Yes, you can have that during the noon hour. You can't have it when it disturbs office work or classes. The plaza is often full of these sad little non-singers with their guitars caterwauling! [laughter] Some of them are so bad I can't believe it. But then also you have these lovely classical trios or quartets playing Bach or Boccherini, and you have the puppet theaters, and you have mime performances out there and so on.

Riess: That fellow in the red-spotted white outfit who takes a very central position and stands on his head or lies down--I personally feel furious when I get around him; I really lose all sense of perspective.

Wilson: Since he has been involved in an altercation with the police and demanding privileges which the rules don't allow, I don't feel very kindly toward him either.

Riess: The police do patrol that area all the time, so the police set the limits?

Wilson: That's right, that's right. I don't know what the fellow really does, but I have an unfavorable opinion because he has tried to get around the rules and has tried to challenge the police when they are so long-suffering and so careful. If a policeman grabs you by the arm now the fashion is to shout "police brutality" and he may be barely touching you. "But he shoved me." Nonsense.

Riess: When alumni and so on come back to the university, is that the way they would likely approach the university, from Bancroft and Telegraph, or do they just stop by the Alumni House first? It is terribly serene down there.

Wilson: I think they go through the plaza, but I think now they are being re-educated into realizing that the performers in the plaza are not students. They are street people who are exercising the right of free speech and performance.

I think that Telegraph Avenue itself has received enough publicity so the street merchants are considered a tourist attraction now rather than an eyesore. I had an alumni friend of mine walking along Telegraph Avenue with me and he was making comments about the freakish appearance of the students. I said, "These are not students." He said, "How do you know?" I said, "Why don't you ask them? They're street people, although sometimes students, to be sure, are dressed a little freaky, but the people you see are not." He said, "I will."

Wilson: He stopped and said, "Hello, how are you?" The street person said, "Oh, I'm fine. How are you?" He said, "Are you a student here?" "Oh, hell, no. I'm not smart enough to go here." He stopped a couple of others and they were not students and he said, "I'm convinced." [laughter] Berkeley has attracted them through the benign city fathers, benign and misguided, having provided all the services and facilities for these street people so they don't go hungry, so they have a place to crash, as they say, and so they have a free medical clinic and so on.

With the attraction of the climate we have here, and the attractions of the campus itself--where there is no one who can patrol every restroom and every building--it is no wonder we have street people. They invaded Harmon Gymnasium for a while to use the showers and the towels and everything. But the gym is patrolled now by a security man because you just couldn't have the place invaded by these tramps, who often are filthy dirty and who come and crowd the facilities for legitimate students.

The Mace

Riess: Another item was the new mace for Charter Day. Was that a project with a history?

Wilson: Oh, yes, indeed. And it was a nice, little, painless episode. Two years ago after Charter Day, the old university baton was stolen. Now, the university baton was simply a billy club with some blue and gold ribbons attached to it. It was made from the wood of North Hall, which was the second building on the campus, not the first. When I became chairman of public ceremonies I inherited it because it had been the tradition that the university marshal carry the "university baton," as it was called. (It was nothing to look at and I secretly didn't think it had much tradition to it.) Anyway, we used it until two years ago.

Then it was stolen out of a locked room. We advertised for it and tried to get it back but not too strenuously, because I said, "Good riddance. Let's get a real mace or scepter and let's have it made from the wood of the original South Hall. We probably can get someone to finance it." But how much money would be needed and what kind of design? That set the project in motion.

I called Jack Zane, who is a fine artist and who was then the head of publications, but an artist in his own right. I said, "We've got to design a mace and then have pictures taken of it and be prepared to show it to prospective donors." Jack designed, drew,

Wilson: a very handsome mace (not the one that we finally got). The materials were ebony and rosewood and so on. We had it photographed in color and Jack shuffled it around to various craftsmen to get an idea of costs. He said he enjoyed that project more than any he has been on because there are so few people left who are silver-smiths or real wood carvers or who can join various components together. He managed to find them. (Bill [William] Corlett, the architect, and an alum, did some of the carving on the thing. I think he carved the bear's head for free.)

Anyway, when I presented this to the chancellor, with Dick Erickson there because he thought he had two or three people in mind [to finance it], Chancellor Bowker just looked at it and he said, "Let's do it"--it cost about \$6,000--"I've got some gift money which is unattached. Let's not go begging for \$6,000. Let's just do it. Let's get it done for my last Charter Day." [laughter]

We said to Jack Zane, who by now was retired but working on private commissions, "Go right ahead. We've got the money and you've got the design. The chancellor thinks it should be modified here and there." Jack, with great enthusiasm, went about getting the thing done, and it was done in time for Charter Day of 1980.

The first time that Bowker saw it was when Jack and I went up to his office and they said, "He's in a cabinet meeting." We said, "Call him out." (We had a photographer there.) So they called him out of the cabinet meeting. Jack Zane presented him with the mace, and he said, "Oh, good! My successor, Heyman, is in the cabinet meeting. Let's go in and give it to him. He'll have to carry it at Charter Day anyway." So in we paraded, disrupting the whole meeting. Bowker handed it to Heyman, who said, "It's beautiful," and they had pictures taken.

The mace had its official public introduction at Charter Day, 1980, when the university marshal, Mike Heyman, who was also the chancellor-designate, carried it in. It now has a fixed place on the front of the lectern. And it is kept securely in the police vault downstairs [in Sproul Hall] with the order from the chancellor that "this can be released only to me [chancellor], or to somebody designated by me, or my successor, or to Professor Wilson, or to somebody designated in writing by him." So we think we have a chance of keeping it for a few years at least.

I am personally delighted that the old university baton was stolen because now we have a beautiful object which is made from the wood of South Hall. Jack Zane had gone there when they were doing remodeling and found a chunk of wood from the original

- Wilson: timber of South Hall. They were removing it because something had to be installed. We now have a mace which has a history and it comes from South Hall.
- Riess: That's excellent. We talked ages ago about the original academic robes. You were saying you were not sure whether the same academic robe had been worn from Wheeler on down.
- Wilson: Oh, that's the president's robe. I know that Sproul wore it and then I know Kerr had it fixed and then Hitch had it fixed. (Saxon was never inaugurated formally. He didn't want any.) It belongs to the regents and it's down in university archives. When Hitch was inaugurated--Hitch was a very short man, a very tiny man--it was too big for him. (Kerr doesn't look tall, but he's a lot taller. Since he's bald he looks shorter than he is, and Sproul was a lot taller.) Our department of dramatic art was called on to alter the gown, not by cutting anything off, but by taking a big hem in the skirt of the thing and in the arms--fixing it so it would look all right on a smaller man.
- Riess: Is there a chancellor's robe?
- Wilson: No, no chancellor's robe. They are supposed to present him with a special medal, but somebody at University Hall forgets about having a new one made. So it's often not ready by the time a new chancellor is inaugurated.
- Riess: Do you mean a medal on a ribbon?
- Wilson: Yes, to hang around his neck. I can't remember what inauguration it was, but on one occasion they just handed the new man a box with nothing in it [laughter] because they hadn't ordered the new medal in time. You have to think a long time ahead because medals are hard to come by.

The Summing Up

- Riess: If you do any summing up, I guess you will have to do it in writing if we're going to be serious about finishing the interviews today.

[A written conclusion submitted by Professor Wilson]

I think if I were asked to sum up I would say that I am profoundly grateful to have been a part of the life of the University of California, Berkeley. It is a noble place to live and to serve. I believe that there are no human institutions which strive harder for truth, justice, understanding, and equality. In a great university like this, these ideals are not given lip service only; they direct and shape the life of every teacher-scholar.

Every scholar conducts a search for truth and knowledge in his own field. He knows he must be daring but dispassionate; that every conclusion must be based on irrefutable evidence and that nothing can be overlooked; that what he discovers must be shared with men of goodwill everywhere. The scholar also knows that when he imparts his knowledge in a classroom, he must act without fear, favor, or affection--and must be an example of integrity and fairness for his students to emulate. At the same time, he knows he must treat his students with sympathy and understanding, remembering, always, that human beings are the noblest creation of our planet.

Where else are such ideals so universal? Is there any other field or profession (except the church, perhaps) where success depends on the living of and the practice of such ideals?

All true universities operate within these ideals--but the University of California offers much more. It provides a surpassingly beautiful setting and a benign climate, both of which help to foster the life of the mind, the growth of integrity, and the striving for achievement.

Of course the university makes mistakes and sometimes fails to realize its ideals. Scholars are human and subject to all the frailties of men. They often are in disagreement over matters of policy and practice. The disagreements can be lively and passionate. But underlying all such disagreements and arguments is a sincere dedication to the principles of truth, justice, and equality, and an honest willingness to listen and to learn from others. In all my years at Berkeley I have never personally seen an example of trickery, dirty dealing, or back stabbing such as are found, we are told, in the worlds of politics and business.

In my years on the campus, as the foregoing pages attest, I have lived and worked with many great and good men and women. I have watched their service and achievement with admiration and awe. Their contributions as scholars, teachers, administrators, and human beings have been immense. I have felt surrounded by nobility and goodness. What better life can one ask?

Transcriber: Michelle Stafford
Final Typist: Marilyn White

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A. PUBLICATIONS AND CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

- "Levels of Achievement in Acting" in Educational Theatre Journal, Vol. III (October 1951), pp. 230-6.
- "Theories of Oral Interpretation". Paper presented at national speech convention, December 1951.
- "Commencement at the Large University" in Journal of Higher Education, Vol. XXIII (February 1952), pp. 89-94.
- "Versatile Tragedians: Edwin Booth & James E. Murdoch" in Speech Monographs, Vol. XVIII (March 1952), pp. 27-38.
- "Great Comedians of the American Stage" in UCLA Theatre Arts (May 1952), pp. 3-6.
- "The Growth of Oral Interpretation at the University of California" in The Speech Teacher, Vol. I (September 1952), pp. 187-192.
- "With God's Help--And Guts" in National Parent-Teacher, Vol. XLVII, No. 9 (May 1953), pp. 8-12; reprinted in The Reader's Digest, October 1953.
- "Judging the Achievements of the Actor". Paper delivered to the regional meeting of ANTA, December 1954.
- "Forgotten Queen of the American Stage: Mary Ann Duff" in Educational Theatre Journal (March 1955).
- "What Is Style in Acting?" in Quarterly Journal of Speech (April 1955).
- "Queen of Spasms: The Acting of Clara Morris" in Speech Monographs (November 1955).
- "Emotionalism in Acting" in Quarterly Journal of Speech (February 1956).
- Review of "Mrs. Fiske and the American Theatre" in Quarterly Journal of Speech, Vol. XLII, No. 3 (October 1956), pp. 310.
- Review of "The Spirit of Tragedy" in Quarterly Journal of Speech, Vol. XLIII, No. 2 (April 1957), pp. 205-206.
- Review of "A Swinger of Birches: A Portrait of Robert Frost" in Quarterly Journal of Speech, Vol. XLIII, No. 4 (December 1957), pp. 440-441.
- "Some Qualifications of the Successful Actress" in Educational Theatre Journal, Vol. X, No. 1 (March 1958), pp. 11-20.
- Review of "Sound and Poetry" in Quarterly Journal of Speech, Vol. XLIV, No. 2 (April 1958), pp. 192-193.
- "The Greatest Comedians of the American Stage". Paper presented at the annual convention of the American Educational Theatre Association, Washington, D.C., December 1959.
- "Schools of Acting from Mary Ann Duff to Minnie Maddern Fiske". Paper presented to annual convention of the American Educational Theatre Association, Denver, Colorado, August 1960.
- "The Life and Art of Mary Ann Duff" and "The Life and Art of Laura Keane" contributed to Notable American Women, 1607-1950, A Biographical Dictionary, Fall 1960.
- Review of "Theatre: The Rediscovery of Style" in Quarterly Journal of Speech, Vol. XLVII, No. 1 (February 1961), pp. 82-83.
- "The Art of the Leading Actresses of the American Stage" in Quarterly Journal of Speech, Vol. XLVIII, No. 1 (February 1962), pp. 31-38.

"Richard Mansfield: Actor of the Transition" in Educational Theatre Journal, Vol. XIV, No. 1 (March 1962), pp. 38-44.

A History of American Acting. Indiana University Press. 1966. 310 pages.

Review of "The Innocent Eye" in Western Humanities Review, Spring 1967,

Three Hundred Years of American Drama and Theatre from "Ye Bare and Ye Cubb" to "Hair". Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973. 532 pages. Second Revised Edition to be published September, 1981.

Book reviews in American Historical Review and in Journal of American History.

Presentation of an average of 20 public lectures, readings, recitals, etc. each year since 1950.

Reprinted from *The Speech Teacher*,
Vol. 1, No. 3, September 1952

B. THE GROWTH OF ORAL INTERPRETATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Garff B. Wilson

IN recent years, the University of California has witnessed a phenomenal growth of its courses in the Oral Interpretation of Literature. In 1941,¹ 4 members of the Speech Department were teaching this subject; in 1949, 12 instructors were assigned to it. In 1941, 13 classes in Oral Interpretation were offered; eight years later, 38 classes were being given. In 1941, about 340 students were enrolled in these courses; in 1949, there were more than 1,000. During this eight year period, the enrollment in the University increased 30%; the enrollment in Oral Interpretation courses increased 300%.

This remarkable growth is a result not only of good teaching and wise departmental leadership; more especially it has resulted from the adoption of an approach to Oral Interpretation which serves the ideals of a liberal arts college and furthers the aims of general education. The experience at California may be useful to other Departments of Speech where Oral Interpretation has not yet attained the standing it deserves.

In the discussion which follows, it should be understood that neither proselytizing nor self advertisement is intended. There are many approaches to Oral Interpretation, each of which may be successful in serving different needs in different circumstances. The California approach is not necessarily new or

unique. It is found in several other colleges and universities throughout the country. Yet, because this approach has been unusually successful in recent years, a survey of its aims and growth should prove illuminating and useful.

The Speech Department at the University of California (Berkeley) has always been unorthodox. It has not developed along the lines followed by similar departments in many other leading universities, and so it has often been viewed with curiosity, perplexity, and sometimes even hostility. There is little cause for these attitudes when one understands the traditions and educational philosophy which have influenced the growth of the department.

The University of California has always been conservative in its educational policies. Although forward-looking, it has never indulged in radical experimentation, and has never embraced courses or specialties until they have been proved to be worthy additions to the traditional disciplines. The College of Letters and Science, to which the Speech Department belongs, is a liberal and not an applied arts college. It has never given credit for "skills" or "performance" courses, but only for those courses where intellectual growth is the primary aim.

Courses in Oral Interpretation and Public Speaking were originally given in the English Department. In 1915, a separate Department of Public Speaking was created, drawing its faculty, naturally, from English. Martin C. Flaherty,

Mr. Wilson (Ph.D., Cornell, 1940) is an Associate Professor of Speech at the University of California.

¹ I have chosen 1941 and 1949 for comparison because each may be considered a "normal" pre-crisis year.

Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory, became head of the new department and retained the chairmanship until 1939, when Gerald E. Marsh, the present chairman, succeeded him. In its thirty-six years of existence, the department has had only two chairmen. It retained its original designation as the Department of Public Speaking until 1947, when it finally became the Department of Speech.

Professor Flaherty, courtly, conservative, and somewhat remote, was strongly opposed to any "fripperies" in his department. The content of every course and the discipline it offered had to satisfy comparison with courses in Philosophy, Mathematics, the languages, etc. The beginning course in Public Speaking, for example, was primarily concerned with logic and analysis, with gathering and evaluating ideas, with organizing and outlining material. Delivery and platform behavior were incidental. Students often complained that there was little public speaking in Public Speaking. They always received the reply that no one had a right to speak unless he had something to say; that in an era dominated by propaganda and misrepresentation, a clear head was more important to a speaker than a glib tongue. Today, the aims of Professor Flaherty are retained in the basic Public Speaking course, although the course has been given new organization, force, and focus by Professor Marsh and his colleagues.

The underlying philosophy of the Speech Department at California is revealed in a report of the department's Committee on Speech Curriculum. The report says:

The core of the graduate and undergraduate work in the Department of Speech is the study of human communication—its values, purposes, techniques, institutions, and social effects. A student majoring in Speech should gain an

understanding of the nature of language, and of the rhetorical structure and function of the various kinds of discourse. He should understand how men are moved to belief and action through both rational and emotional elements in speech. He should be prepared to analyze critically discourse of all sorts, applying with understanding the standards of meaningfulness and logical validity. He should gain insight into the role of communication in human affairs from studying the effect of social circumstances and opinion on the contents of press, radio, film, public debate and discussion, and their effect, in turn, on society and its institutions. Finally, he should have first hand experience with the creation, interpretation, and presentation of various types of discourse.²

The fields of speech, as they are developing at California, can be divided into three major divisions: (1) Theory and analysis of discourse; (2) Communication and society; and (3) Communication skills and techniques.³ Oral Interpretation appears in division (1), and not—as some teachers might expect—in division (3). Courses in division (1), as the Committee on Curriculum states, aim to give the student "an understanding of the psychology and philosophy of language, the nature of meaning, and the manner of organizing discourse, a theoretical and practical concern with the canons of sound reasoning, and an appreciative insight into poetry, drama, and other forms of literature."

In a department with a history and a point of view such as I have outlined, it is not surprising that the courses in Oral Interpretation have developed into substantial liberal arts courses, widely popular and respected as a valuable part of the curriculum.

A course in Oral Interpretation was given at California as early as 1905, when speech instruction was still offered

² This statement is the work of Professors Jacobus ten Broek and Edward Barnhart.

³ It is to be noted that courses in dramatic art, once included in the curriculum of the Speech Department, are now offered by a separate department.

by the English Department. In the college catalogue for that year, the course was entitled "Oral Interpretation" and was described as "the reading of English and American poetry and prose. Training in Vocal Expression." Five years later, there were two lower division courses entitled "Oral Interpretation," the first of which provided "a study of the fundamental principles of the dramatic reading of poetry," and the second offered "the dramatic reading of three or four of the plays of Shakespeare." In 1915, two upper division courses were added, one stressing a study of "the fundamental principles of dramatic reading," and the other emphasizing "voice culture" through "the presentation of selected scenes from plays." In 1919, an additional upper division course was introduced entitled "Vocal Interpretation." It was described as "A course in oral reading based upon selections from the Bible, Browning, Tennyson, Emerson, and Carlyle." This description clearly reveals the interests of the particular instructor who taught the course.

By 1926, the basic course had become "The Fundamentals of Expression and Interpretation," and was described simply as "practice in reading and speaking." The upper division sequence was now called "Literary Interpretation—The study of typical literary forms such as the ballad, the lyric, the essay, and the short story." For the next fifteen years, and throughout the ensuing war period, there were minor changes and variations, but the basic course continued to emphasize the fundamentals of expression and interpretation through the reading of simple prose and poetry, while the upper division courses emphasized "literary interpretation."

It is evident that during all of the period from 1905 to 1945, literary content was stressed in the Oral Interpreta-

tion courses. However, there was no uniformity of materials or of method. Each instructor organized and taught the basic course in his own way. While there was general agreement on aims, there was little agreement on texts and procedures. In 1946, when many of the older staff members had retired and when enrollment in speech classes was increasing rapidly, it was decided to re-examine the courses in Oral Interpretation, to re-define their aims, and to regularize the procedures, methods, and materials of the basic course. The department did not wish to set up a standardized product; but it wanted Oral Interpretation instructors to agree on general aims and outline (so that students could transfer freely between the growing number of sections), and it wanted the instructors to pool their ideas for the creation of the strongest possible course.

There followed a long series of meetings, out of which emerged agreement on aims and policy, and a general outline of units of work to be covered in each semester of the basic course. The decisions of the group were eventually incorporated in a printed syllabus, compiled by Miss Aurora M. Quiros, which is now used as a general guide by all instructors teaching the basic course.

The Speech Department at California is proud of the success of its courses in Oral Interpretation. An examination of the nature of these courses will, I believe, reveal the secret of their success, and will demonstrate that these courses can be one of the best possible avenues leading to liberal education.

II⁴

Liberal education or general education—as distinguished from special education leading to competence in a voca-

⁴ The material which follows is a revised version of a paper published in *Western Speech* XIV (October, 1950), pp. 27-30.

tion—is that education which seeks to acquaint all students with their common heritage. It seeks to teach them those concepts of nature, man, and society which are the foundations of western civilization. The advocates of liberal or general education believe that a citizen cannot fulfill his responsibility of governing his own life and sharing in the management of the community unless he understands the basic beliefs and events which have moulded his society, and unless he realizes that "the past and the present are parts of the same unrolling scene." Matthew Arnold defined this type of education as that which acquaints a man with the best that has been thought and said in the world. Others have called it preparation in the general art of the free man and the citizen.

Education of this type fosters certain traits of mind. These traits can be defined in many ways. One of the best definitions is given in the Harvard Report on *General Education in a Free Society*, which states that general education⁵ should develop the abilities (1) to think effectively; (2) to communicate thought; (3) to make relevant judgments; and (4) to discriminate among values.⁶

Oral Interpretation, as it is taught at California and at many other universities, fits perfectly into the pattern of general education and is an effective means of developing the traits of mind listed in the Harvard Report. This course is not a class in pantomime, or in

acting, or in voice and diction. It is a course in the *oral study of literature*.

The course has two basic aims which are interrelated and inseparable. The first aim is to develop the student's insight into the nature of poetry and literature in general and to increase his appreciation of it. The second aim is to develop in the student those techniques and skills in approaching literature and communicating it that make for a vital emotional and intellectual experience. The whole process is an integrated one, involving both an appropriate emotional and intellectual response to literature and skill in communicating the ideational and emotional content of the literature. In a course of this sort, oral skills are not ends in themselves but the means by which a student develops his own understanding and communicates it to others. Teachers of this kind of course believe that a close and honest study of a piece of literature will reveal the way it should be read. At the same time, the oral reading of the literature will disclose new literary values and will increase understanding of the literature. The process, thus, is a two way process, in which each phase strengthens and increases the effect of the other.

It can easily be seen that Oral Interpretation, thus conceived, is an exacting and liberalizing discipline. Consider the general preparation involved in communicating the thought and emotion of a single poem. The interpreter must comprehend the ideas in the poem and their precise development; he must grasp the attitude and emotion which accompany each idea; he must understand the structure, the rhyme scheme, the metrical scheme, the imagery, the sound values, and all the other poetical devices and their relationship to the over-all poetic effect; he must be acquainted with the author's background

⁵ The term general education, as used by the Harvard Report, is understood to have about the same meaning as liberal education, except that it applies to high schools, as well as to colleges, and by including a vastly greater number of students within its scope, "escapes the invidium which, rightly or wrongly, attaches to liberal education in the minds of some people."

⁶ *General Education in a Free Society* (Cambridge, 1946), p. 52.

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and philosophy of life and with the specific motivation for the poem; he must understand the poem in relationship to the period in which it was written; and, finally, he must learn to use his voice so he can communicate to a listener the full intellectual and emotional significance which he has discovered in the poem.

The extent to which study of this sort will contribute to a liberal or general education is easily seen if we trace the steps involved in preparing a specific piece of literature according to this method. Suppose, for example, the student chooses to interpret Matthew Arnold's well known poem *Dover Beach*.

In analyzing the text of the poem, the student will note that Arnold first describes the beauty of a moonlit night on Dover Beach. Presently the poet becomes aware of the pounding of the surf and he remembers that the same sound reminded Sophocles of "the ebb and flow of human misery." Arnold then recalls that "the sea of faith was once too at the full"—like the tide on Dover Beach—but now faith is retreating and disappearing, leaving a desolation where human beings have only each other to cling to in a confused and hopeless world.

After perceiving this sequence of ideas, the student must ask himself: who was Sophocles and in what ways was he concerned with the ebb and flow of human misery? Finding the answers to these questions may involve a good deal of reading and thinking. When the answers have been discovered, the student must next ask: what does Arnold mean by the "sea of faith" and why is it retreating "down the vast edges drear and naked shingles of the world?" To find an adequate answer to these questions, the student will have to examine the era in which Arnold lived. He will have to understand the crisis in faith

and morals which resulted from the scientific and technological revolution of the 19th Century. Matthew Arnold, as a man, must then be studied, with attention given to his character, his particular philosophy of life, and his reactions to the problems of his time.

After the student has achieved an understanding of the ideas of the poem and of the background of these ideas, he must examine the *form* of the poem. What stanza pattern, what rime scheme and metrical scheme, has the poet chosen—and why did he clothe his thought in this form? Did he make a good choice of form? How effective is his imagery, for example, of "a darkling plain swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight where ignorant armies clash by night?" How effective is the poet's choice of words, his use of poetic devices? Do they contribute to the total poetic effect of the piece?

Concurrently with this process of understanding the form and content of the poem, and contributing to this process, the student should be developing the oral skills necessary for communicating the full beauty and truth of the poem to a listener. He must determine the best phrasing and centering to employ. He must decide how best to preserve the continuity so that the listener is led smoothly and logically from the peaceful scene at the beginning to the confused alarms of clashing armies at the end. He must further develop all the shadings and variations in quality, tempo, volume, and pitch necessary to communicate the precise mood and emotion of each line. Finally, he must give adequate projection to all the words, rhythms, and sound values of the poem. In the practice necessary for mastering these skills, and in the final oral presentation to an audience, the student, as well as the audience, enjoys a meaningful emotional and intellectual

experience—the same type of experience that one gets through perceiving and appreciating any work of art.

When such preparation as I have outlined is complete—and this preparation will include a comprehensive written paper plus extensive oral practice—surely the student has had a liberalizing experience. If a liberal or general education seeks to develop the student's abilities to think effectively, to communicate thought, to make relevant judgments, and to discriminate among values, then it is evident that the process involved in preparing *Dover Beach* for oral interpretation directly contributes to the development of all these abilities. Certainly in a comprehensive oral study of the poem a student learns to discriminate among values and to make relevant judgments. He is forced to think carefully and to analyze closely, and his success is tested with precision when he tries to communicate the thought and emotion of the poem to others. Furthermore, the study of a single poem, like *Dover Beach*, introduces a student to many of the vital concepts of nature, man, and society which it is the function of liberal education to disseminate, and the emotional

experience involved in understanding and communicating the poem increases his sensitivity and perception. Just as the window, through which Matthew Arnold gazed upon Dover Beach, revealed a whole world of ideas and emotions to him, so the poem, which Arnold wrote, is a window through which a student may view long vistas in human history and philosophy—vistas of the past which illuminate the present and make the student of the poem a wiser and more enlightened citizen.

Oral Interpretation, as outlined above, has proved its worth as a contribution to liberal education at the University of California. The College of Letters and Science accepts the beginning course as a fulfillment of its basic requirement in the fine arts. The English Department requires its prospective teachers to take a special course in Oral Interpretation. The total enrollment in this type of course has increased 300% in the last few years. With such solid achievement as background, the coming years should witness continued growth as the liberalizing effects of Oral Interpretation become better understood and more widely accepted.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY
C. Report of the Director of the Centennial Celebration
September 1967 - June 1968

Introduction

The purposes of the Berkeley campus Centennial Celebration¹ were (1) to evaluate and honor the achievements of the past one hundred years, (2) to clarify the goals and discuss the means for even greater achievement and service in the future, and (3), through a very diverse program, to bring enjoyment and increased understanding of the University to the campus family and the public in general. The report which follows summarizes the success achieved in reaching these goals.

The Director of the Celebration was Professor Garff B. Wilson², who worked closely with a small staff and with a volunteer committee.³ These groups were organized in May, 1967, with the ambition to start the Celebration on September 30, 1967, and to conclude the official program with Commencement, June 15, 1968. This calendar was followed successfully.⁴ (It was the calendar which had been adopted some years before by the Universitywide Committee on the Centennial, a committee which subsequently was disbanded. Also, the Berkeley campus Advisory Committee on the Centennial Celebration, which had been in existence for several years, was disbanded; most of the members were appointed to serve as chairmen of subcommittees to work with the Director, Professor Wilson.)

The general plan of the Berkeley Celebration, as it was developed by the Director and his Steering Committee, is outlined in the prospectus, attached as Annex 1. The calendars of events and the reports given below will show that the plan was realized with minor changes and adjustments.

The major goals of the Celebration were achieved primarily through convocations; high-level academic symposia; a number of minor symposia and conferences; open houses, meetings, lectures, plays, concerts, dedications, art exhibits, athletic contests, and other events to which the campus community and the public were invited.

The Office of Public Ceremonies (renamed the "Centennial Celebration Center" in honor of this special year), the Alumni Association, the Office of Public Affairs, community organizations, numerous academic departments, and various student organizations were instrumental in advertising this gigantic operation of educational enlightenment.

¹See Annex 1 *

²See Annex 2

³See Annex 3

⁴See Annex 3A, 3B, 3C

*This Annex and the annexes following may be referred to in the Office of Public Ceremonies, 326 Sproul Hall.

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The three major convocations had an attendance of 16,000 and the major symposia drew an audience of 15,650. "The Berkeley Fellows", an honorific organization of 100 members, held its first meeting on February 24, 1968. Centennial Citations were presented to 84 outstanding individuals and groups "for distinguished achievements and notable service to the University." The groundbreaking ceremony for the Art Museum took place October 6, 1967, the Earl Warren Legal Center was dedicated January 2, 1968, and Lawrence Hall of Science was opened May 20, and the new Zellerbach Auditorium-Theatre was opened on May 21 for a week of concerts featuring the music of Igor Stravinsky with the composer in attendance.

Annual meetings were held on campus by the Forest Products Laboratory, the Prytanean Alumni, the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study and the Consumers Cooperative of Berkeley. Conferences were held by the Associated Women Students, the American Physical Society, the American Oriental Society, and the Professional Schools Program. Symposia were staged by the Nutritional Foundation, Inc., the Institute of Food Technologists, and the Department of Nutritional Science, the Berkeley Foundation, the Chinese Students Association and the Center for Chinese Studies, and the American Mathematics Society. Four major art exhibits, one architecture exhibit, and one anthropological exhibit were held. In addition, centennial historical exhibits were set up in the main Library during Charter Week and Dwinelle Hall and the lobby of the Campanile during the Spring Quarter.

The following activities contributed to the more festive aspects of the celebration: two fireworks displays, the wearing of centennial buttons, the flying of balloons, the All-Campus Chancellor's Reception with three different bands in the Student Union Complex, Cal's defeat of Michigan in the closing minutes of a football game played on September 30, 1967, and Bear's defeat of the Stanford Indians in the Big Game of 1967, the state tour of the California Marching Band, the planting of the Centennial Tree dedicated to Robert G. Sproul and the burying of the Time Capsule, the ASUC Jazz Festival, the AAWU and the NCAA Track and Field Championships, Twilight Concerts on Sproul Hall Steps, Centennial Day in Oakland with the placing of the commemorative plaque on the site of the College of California, SUPERB's huge birthday cake and All-Campus Birthday Party, the "Centennial Fair" with the Senior Sweetheart finalists modeling bathing suits dating from the turn of the century, and the various events of Senior Week.

The report of the Berkeley Centennial Celebration will be presented in the following sections:

- I. Chronology and Brief Descriptions
- II. Detailed Report of Events of Charter-Alumni Week *
- III. List of Major News Stories
- IV. Statistical Summary of Attendance at Principal Events
- V. Annexes, i.e., Printed Programs, Calendars, etc.
- VI. Summary of Money Spent

*This report, and reports III.-VI. may be referred to in the Office of Public Ceremonies, 326 Sproul Hall.

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I. Chronology and Brief Descriptions

September 30, 1967

10 a.m.

Raising of Centennial Flag, area south of Sproul Hall. Attendance: 500. Chancellor Roger W. Heyns spoke; at his signal, the football cannon was fired and Mrs. Heyns, with the aid of two students, raised the flag. The California Marching Band played HAIL TO CALIFORNIA as the flag went up. Half way up, a breeze caught the folds of the flag and it rippled straight out so all could see the design. There was spontaneous applause. Then Jay Newman, President of the Junior Class, invited the audience to inaugurate the Centennial Trail, a walking tour of the campus, by taking a token pilgrimage to three significant campus spots. The Band led the way to Sather Gate. As the audience left the flag raising, each was given a copy of the newly published booklet, THE CENTENNIAL TRAIL. Note: The flag raised on this occasion was one made by hand by Mrs. Shan Otey of the Department of Dramatic Art. The flags ordered from a Los Angeles manufacturer had not arrived.

11 a.m.

Breaking of the Centennial Trail.

First stop: Faculty Glade; speaker, Executive Vice Chancellor Earl Cheit.

Second stop: Hearst Mining Circle; speaker, Professor Emilio Segre, Nobel Laureate.

Third stop: Esplanade of Sather Tower; speaker, Professor Walter Knight, Dean of the College of Letters and Science. At the end of Dean Knight's speech, Chancellor and Mrs. Heyns cut a ribbon which opened the new "Mini-Museum" on the ground floor of the tower.

1:30 p.m.

Football game, California vs. Michigan.

Before the game started, Chancellor Heyns presented a Centennial Citation to President Harlan Hatcher of the University of Michigan. During the half time entertainment, the California Marching Band and the California Rooting section paid tribute to the Centennial of the University of California and the Sesquicentennial of the University of Michigan. The band and card stunts were shown on national television. California won the game in the last three minutes by the score 9 to 7.

October 4, 1967

12:30 p.m.

Chancellor and Mrs. Heyns entertained 300 student leaders at a buffet luncheon held backstage of the Hearst Greek Theatre.

October 4, 1967

2 p.m.

Convocation introducing the Centennial Year, Hearst Greek Theatre. Attendance: 3,000. Principal speakers: Chancellor Heyns and Sargent Shriver, first Director of the Peace Corps; Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity. Music by the California Band and the Lee Schipper Jazz Quintet. Centennial Citations were presented to President Emeritus Robert G. Sproul (and this was considered the Number 1 Citation) and to Sargent Shriver.

7:30 p.m.

Mayors' dinner at the Men's Faculty Club for mayors, city managers, and council members from the Alameda County Mayors' Conference and the Contra Costa County Mayors' Conference. Attendance: 70. A cocktail party was hosted by Chancellor Roger W. Heyns, who was the main speaker for the dinner. Entertainment was provided by the Senior Octet. After dinner the two Mayors' Conferences adjourned to their respective meetings.

October 5, 1967

8 p.m.

Chancellor's Reception and Dance for all students, Student Center. Attendance: 5,000. Chancellor and Mrs. Heyns, Acting President and Mrs. Harry Wellman received new students in the Student Union. The Vice-Chancellors and the Dean of Students received continuing students in the Dining Commons. Ray Hackett and his orchestra played in Pauley Ballroom. The Crystal Set entertained in the Bear's Lair; Big Mama Thornton and the Hound Dogs entertained in the Dining Commons. From 9:15 to 9:45, all activity was suspended so the guests could enjoy the first Centennial display of fireworks. The display was presented from the Berkeley Marina and was clearly visible all over the Bay Area. Thousands of Bay Area residents saw it and knew that the Centennial Celebration was in progress. (A second display of fireworks was presented on May 18, 1968, at the Berkeley Marina Festival to advertize the Festival and the Centennial.)

October 6, 1967

3:30 p.m.

Groundbreaking Ceremony for the University Art Museum, site of the museum. Attendance: 300 to 400. Principal speakers: Chancellor Heyns; Peter Selz, Director of the Museum; Regent Norton Simon; and Professor James Ackerman, Chairman of the Department of Art at Harvard and former Berkeley faculty member.

6:30 p.m.

Reception and dinner for special invited guests, Faculty Club. Centennial Citations were presented to Regent Simon and Professor Ackerman.

October 6, 1967

8 p.m. Opening of three exhibitions: (1) ONCE INVISIBLE (scientific photographs) at the University Art Gallery; (2) Paintings and prints of R. B. Kitaj, Worth Ryder Art Gallery; and (3) Psychedelic Posters, ASUC Gallery. ONCE INVISIBLE drew a total audience of 14,078.

October 8, 1967

8:30 p.m. Production of the play PHILADELPHIA HERE I COME by the San Francisco Theatre Company, Wheeler Auditorium. Attendance: 175.

October 22, 1967

2 p.m. Production of Verdi's MACBETH by the San Francisco Opera Company, Hearst Greek Theatre. Attendance: 4,008.

October 28 and 29

8:30 p.m. Production of O'Neill's LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT by the American Conservatory Theatre, Wheeler Auditorium. House sold out both nights. Attendance: 1,654.

November 10 and 11

Golden Bear Centennial Invitational Debate Tournament, sponsored by the forensics team of the campus. Teams from 54 colleges and universities competed. A trophy, provided by the Centennial Celebration Committee, was won by the University of Southern California team. There were 350 participants.

November 13-18

Big Game Week activities (rally, reunions, parade, etc.) featured the Centennial theme.

December 5, 1967

3 p.m. Annual Christmas University Meeting. The Glee Club, Treble Clef Society and the Concert Band presented a program of Christmas music including music of 1868, Pauley Ballroom. Attendance: 1,000. Chancellor Heyns presided. The Christmas message was delivered by Professor Emeritus Robert Brode, who was awarded a Centennial Citation.

4:30 p.m. Annual reading of Charles Dickens' A CHRISTMAS CAROL by Professor Garff B. Wilson of the Departments of Speech and Dramatic Art, Heller Lounge of the Student Union. Attendance: 300. Hot cider and cookies were served. The girls who assisted were dressed in costumes of 1868.

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December 8-9, 1967

First Centennial Symposium, THE CAMPUS AND THE COMMUNITY -- THE UNIVERSITY IN THE URBAN CRISIS, Pauley Ballroom. Attendance: about 800. Sessions were held on the afternoon and evening of December 8, and in the morning and afternoon of December 9. (See printed program.) At a luncheon meeting on December 9, Chancellor Heyns presented Centennial Citations to Mr. Daniel Koshland, Mrs. Gerald Hagar, and Mrs. Winifred Heard.

January 2, 1968

2 p.m.

Dedication of the Earl Warren Legal Center. Attendance (which was by invitation): 400. Principal speakers: Chancellor Heyns; Edward Levi, President-Designate of the University of Chicago; Chief Justice Earl Warren; President Charles Hitch; Regent Theodore Meyer; Edward C. Halbach, Jr., Dean of the Law School; Samuel Ladar, President, Boalt Hall Alumni Association; Michael Zeitsoff, President, Boalt Hall Law Student Association; and Frank Newman, Professor of Law.

5:30 p.m.

Reception and dinner, Manville Hall of the Earl Warren Legal Center. Attendance: 200. Centennial Citations were presented to Chief Justice Earl Warren, President-Designate Edward Levi, H. E. Manville, Jr., Chief Justice (of the California Supreme Court) Roger Traynor, and Associate Justice (of the State Supreme Court) Raymond Peters. Chief Justice Warren made a few informal remarks.

8 p.m.

Opening of the exhibition, TREASURES OF THE LOWIE MUSEUM, an exhibition assembled especially for the Centennial Year, Kroeber Hall. Attendance: 22,356, as of June 4, 1968.

January 3, 4, 5, 8

Lectures by judges, lawyers, and legal scholars on legal topics to honor the opening of the Earl Warren Legal Center. Additional programs and lectures were presented on February 8 and 10. All were held in the auditorium of the Legal Center, and all were well attended (1,200-1,500).

January 12 and 13

Symposium on SOCIETAL INFLUENCE AND UNIVERSITY INTEGRITY, presented by The Berkeley Foundation in cooperation with the Centennial Celebration Committee, 145 Dwinelle Hall. One session was held on the evening of January 12, with attendance of 75; another was held on the morning of January 13, with attendance of 75. (See printed program.)

January 15

8 p.m.

Opening of an exhibition of the paintings of Sam Francis, University Art Gallery. Mr. Francis, considered the outstanding young American painter, is an alumnus of the Berkeley campus. The exhibitions, which attracted large crowds, ran through February 18. Attendance: 14,012.

February 8, 9, 10

High School Model United Nations, Pauley Ballroom. Attendance: 1200. Sessions were held for two and a half days. Principal speakers on the opening night were Ambassador Salvador P. Lopez of the Philippine Islands, and Ambassador Anand Panyarachun of Thailand.

March 4

8 p.m.

Opening of exhibition, NEW BRITISH PAINTING AND SCULPTURE, University Art Gallery. The exhibition ran through April 7. Attendance: 13,314.

March 18-26

Charter-Alumni Week Events. (See Section II special report.)

March 24, 25, 26

Second Centennial Symposium, PATTERNS OF AMERICAN PREJUDICE, Pauley Ballroom and Physical Sciences Lecture Hall. Attendance: 3,500. The following topics were discussed at the eight sessions: "The Persistence of American Prejudice," "The Schools and Prejudice," "The Churches and Prejudice," "The Humanities and Prejudice," "The Mass Media and Prejudice," "Government, Politics and Prejudice," "Industry and Prejudice," and "Institutional Strategies Against Prejudice." The symposium was co-sponsored by the Survey Research Center and the Berkeley campus Departments of Political Science, Psychology, and Sociology, with support from the Rockefeller Foundation and the Anti-Defamation League. (See printed program.)

April 25, 26, 27

Third Centennial Symposium, THE STATE OF THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES. Pauley Ballroom, Wheeler Auditorium, 155 Dwinelle Hall, and Alumni House. Attendance: 3,550. Featured artists and topics were: Herbert Blau, "The Future of Drama and the Theatre," Louis Kahn, "The Future of Architecture," Pauline Kael, "The Film Since World War II," Len Lye, "Kinetic and Other Trends in Sculpture," Werner Haftmann, "Measure and Form in Modern German Art," and Elizabeth Bishop reading from her own poetry. (See placard-program.)

April 29

Opening of exhibition, MASTER DRAWINGS FROM CALIFORNIA COLLECTION, University Art Gallery. The exhibition ran through May 23. Attendance: 14,670.

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May 4, 5, 10, 12

8:30 p.m.

Student Opera Theatre production of THE MEDIUM by Gian-Carlo Menotti, Berkeley Little Theatre (because no auditorium was available on campus). Attendance: about 200 each performance. At the May 10 performance a Centennial Citation was presented to the student director, Christopher Keene. (See printed program.)

May 8, 9, 10

Student Symposium, STUDENTS, PROTEST AND SOCIETY, Pauley Ballroom. Attendance: 2,050. Featured speakers and panelists: John Summerskill, Edward Anderson, James Farmer, William B. Boyd, William K. Coblentz, Edward Segel, Thomas W. Braden, Albert Bendich, Russel Kirk, David W. Louisell, Daniel George McIntosh, Robert H. Somers, Warren Hinckle, and Gus Reichbach. (See printed program.)
Second display of Centennial Fireworks.

May 18

9 p.m.

May 19

5 p.m.

Berkeley Centennial Celebration Committee's preview showing of the ten banners depicting the history of the theatre, designed by Mrs. Vernon DeMars and executed by Mrs. DeMars and Mrs. Jack Fisher, which will decorate the lobby of Zellerbach Hall. By invitation. Champagne and strawberries were served. Attendance: 225. Centennial Citations were presented to Mrs. DeMars and Mrs. Fisher. (See printed brochure.)

May 20

3:30 p.m.

Dedication of the Lawrence Hall of Science. Attendance (which was by invitation): 750. Principal address was given by Professor Glenn T. Seaborg, Chairman of the United States Atomic Energy Commission. Centennial Citations were presented by Chancellor Heyns to Regent Edwin W. Pauley, Dr. Edwin M. McMillan, Dr. Glenn T. Seaborg, and Dr. Harvey E. White. (See printed program.)

May 20-25

Fourth Centennial Symposium, A CENTURY OF SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY, Pauley Ballroom. Attendance: 5,600. Featured speakers and topics: George Wald, "The Origin of Death," George Gaylord Simpson, "Man and Nature," Maurice Goldhaber, "The Fundamental Particles of Physics," Sir Frederick C. Bawden, "The Agricultural Sciences: Retrospect and Prospect," Charles B. Huggins, "The High Adventure of Medical Research," and Philip Handler, "The Living State." (See printed program.)

May 21

8:30 p.m. Opening of Zellerbach Hall. "Symphony of Psalms" and "Oedipus Rex" by Igor Stravinsky performed by the University Orchestra and Chorus with guest soloists. Conducted by Mr. Robert Craft with Igor Stravinsky in attendance. Chancellor Heyns welcomed the audience. Attendance: 2,000. Gregory Peck, U.C. alumnus and President of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, introduced Igor Stravinsky. Chancellor Roger W. Heyns then presented Stravinsky with a Centennial Citation. This program was repeated on May 22, attendance: 2,100. (See printed program.)

May 23

10 a.m. President Charles J. Hitch, 13th President of the University, was inaugurated in the Pauley Pavilion on the Los Angeles campus. Chancellor Heyns spoke as the representative of the nine Chancellors. Professor Wilson presented the commentary on the Academic Procession before it entered. (See printed program.)

12 m. The University Chorus and Orchestra with Robert Craft conducting presented a free noon concert of Stravinsky's "Symphony of Psalms" in Zellerbach Auditorium. Attendance: 2,100.

8:30 p.m. The California Marching Band presented a SPRING MUSICAL REVUE as a Centennial salute to the University in Zellerbach Hall. Attendance: 2,100. Standing ovation at the end.

8:30 p.m. The Nicoloudi Dance and Theatre Company of Athens, Greece, presented CHORICA, a program of scenes and choruses from classical Greek drama in the Hearst Greek Theatre. Attendance: 300. (See printed program.) The program was cancelled on May 24 because of rain. It was presented again on Saturday, May 25, in the Hearst Greek Theatre to an audience of 500 and again on Monday evening, May 26, in Zellerbach Auditorium to an audience of 300.

May 24

12:30 p.m. Student luncheon in the lobby of Zellerbach Hall for approximately 400 students and 25 official guests. The students were selected by the academic deans and the deans of students on the basis of academic achievement and leadership.

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May 24

2 p.m.

Third Centennial Convocation, a WELCOME TO PRESIDENT HITCH, Student Union Plaza. Chancellor Roger W. Heyns presided. Two short speeches welcoming President Hitch to the Berkeley campus were given by Theodore McGowen on behalf of the faculty and by Bruce Wild on behalf of the students. Former president Clark Kerr, seated in the audience, received a standing ovation. President Charles J. Hitch and President Kingman Brewster of Yale gave the major addresses. Attendance: 3,000.

3:30 p.m.

Dedication of the Class of 1914 Entranceway and Fountain was not only one of the most enjoyable events of the Centennial Year, but also got the most favorable coverage the Daily Cal granted any single event (in spite of the fact that a few of the names are incorrect.)

"Waterbearers of 1914 Consecrate Fountain" by Susan Redstone, staff writer: "The liveliest dedication held on campus in some time took place on Friday afternoon when the Class of 1914 met to dedicate a new fountain at the College Avenue entrance.

"The 'undistinguished members' of the class wasted no time in polluting the newly erected fountain with the ceremony of libations.

"Even the gods got into the act, pouring in a little unexpected rain. Water allegedly preserved from the old Chem Pond where Haviland Hall now stands was also added to the new pond which has 14 golden metallic cattails growing out of it.

"The Chem Pond was commonly used in those days to immerse students 'who got out of hand.' After a couple of immersions in the dirty viscous liquid their behavior usually improved.

"Grace Band (Bird), former president of Bakersfield College, added some "Midnight Waters" of the Bay to the new pond in commemoration of the days when the Bay Bridge did not exist and students always spent their social hours down on the Berkeley waterfront.

"The best pole vaulter of 1914, architect Edward G. 'Pete' Bangs added some Strawberry Creek water for good measure.

"In 1914 Sather Gate was dedicated, the Campanile was erected, the Agriculture complex was built and the School of Forestry was created. But it was also a big year for drinking.

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(continued)

"Therefore, former editor of the Pelican, composer of the Big C Song, and past president of Mt. Holyoke College (incorrect), N. Loyall McLaren added some beer to the fountain, commemorating the many hours spent at Gus Browsies (Brouse's) Saloon, which he and his brother helped close down forever at the onset of Prohibition.

"He did not, however, add a full stein, but saved some of the beverage to share with his classmates.

"Attorney Lawrence Livingston was honored with the task of turning on the fountain--adding the natural waters, and a new bathing area 'for dogs, birds and law students' was officially established.

"Mining tycoon and Regent Donald McLaughlin said he would protest if the fountain were named after a dog, even if he was partially responsible for the term 'Ludwig's Fountain.' A dog barked in his affirmation.

"McLaughlin, being a Regent, could not help but add some serious words to the gaiety of the occasion and suggested that the ASUC should be sustained by voluntary contributions only, 'just like the old days.'

"The entranceway and fountain were designed by Thomas D. Church and the fountain sculpture was created by Jane Laird."

The dedication was followed by a reception at the Women's Faculty Club. Attendance at the dedication: 200. (See program.)

May 25 and 26

Second concert of Stravinsky music was presented by the University Chorus and Orchestra with Robert Craft conducting and Igor Stravinsky in attendance. Three numbers were presented: OCTET, LES NOCES, and L'HISTOIRE du SOLDAT with guest soloists. Attendance: 2,000 each night. (See printed program.)

June 13

6 p.m.

Centennial Senior Pilgrimage began with a coffee reception on the Terrace of the Golden Bear Restaurant. Chancellor Heyns gave a speech of welcome. Then the Pilgrimage proceeded to the following locations: Ludwig's Fountain, where William Ellsworth spoke and dedicated a plaque to the dog, Ludwig; Morrison Hall, where Professor Walter Horn spoke and dedicated a plaque to the old Spreckels Art Building; Birge Hall, where Professor Samuel Markowitz dedicated a plaque to Bacon Hall; the Hearst Greek Theatre, where football coach Ray Willsey spoke; to the Library Annex, where Professor Emeritus Joel Hildebrand dedicated a plaque to North Hall; and to the Campanile where Professor Garff B. Wilson gave the concluding address. Attendance at Pilgrimage: 75

June 14

- 11:30 a.m. Class Day Luncheon in Faculty Glade, staged by the California Alumni Association. Attendance: 900-1,000. (See printed program.)
- 2 p.m. Baccalaureate Service, Hertz Hall. Principal speakers: Fred Reiner (a student), Professor Garff B. Wilson, and Vice-Chancellor William Boyd. Attendance: 500. (See printed program.)
- 3:30 p.m. Chancellor's Reception for Seniors and their parents, University House.
- 7 p.m. Senior Banquet and Ball, Pauley Ballroom, Student Union. Centennial Citations were presented by Chancellor Heyns to five student organizations which have been especially active in promoting the Centennial Celebration: The California Marching Band, Rally Committee, Oski Dolls, Californians, and Centurions.

June 15

- 10 a.m. The Centennial Year Commencement (but the 105th Commencement Exercises), California Memorial Stadium. Attendance: 18,000 spectators and 3,000 candidates (the largest attendance in many years). Principal addresses were given by Chancellor Heyns and President Hitch. At the end of the ceremony, Professor Wilson was presented with a surprise Centennial Citation. In concluding the ceremony, Chancellor Heyns said: "With the conclusion of this program, we end the major events of the Centennial celebration of the Berkeley campus. It has been a colorful and inspiring anniversary year. I hope that each of you, in some measure, has been touched by the spirit of the anniversary: the honoring of the first one hundred years of achievement and the rededication to greater accomplishment and service in the century to come." (See printed program.)

Note: The Centennial Caravan, sponsored by the California Alumni Association, was scheduled to tour the cities of California in March, April, and May, 1968, to present an exhibition of the work of the University to the general public. Because of technical and financial difficulties, this project was postponed until the fall of 1968.

D. "O U R F A I R B O B"

A Musical Salute
By
The Los Angeles Chapter
CALIFORNIA CLUB CONVENTION 1958

OPENING NUMBER: ("With A Little Bit of Luck")

Chorus: Oh! Bob Sproul was founder of our Cal Club
 And so through him we promoted Unity
 Oh! Bob Sproul was founder of our Cal Club
 But --- With a little bit of luck
 With a little bit of luck
 We will tell you how it came to be
 With a little bit
 With a little bit
 With a little bit of Bruin luck!

Narrator: The scene is Berkeley, the University of California.
 The year - 1930 - The Regents are engaged in the
 serious task of selecting a new President. One
 of the candidates is the young assistant business
 manager - Robert Gordon Sproul. The suspense was
 mounting hourly. But then, from nowhere, came a young
 man to rally to his support. Garff Wilson quickly
 recruited a small group of students with promises
 of free beer and led them to the Sproul resident.
 With Garff leading -- they sang:

Chorus: (To the tune of "You Did It")

 Tonight, old man, you'll be it
 You'll be it
 You'll be it
 You'll come through, you'll prove it
 To us all tonight
 You'll have those Regents ecstatic
 Fanatic
 Lunatic
 You'll have them in a panic
 You'll be it tonight!

Narrator: From this humble beginning, Cal Club was born!
 Under the new President's guiding hand, the
 organization flourished - as time marched on, the
 University grew and expanded. - But, suddenly, dark
 clouds appeared on the horizon -- Unity was threatened.
 In 1956, the Los Angeles chapter gathered to plead
 to the President:

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Chorus: (To the tune of "Wouldn't It Be Loverly")

✓We want out of the PCC
All we want is to be free
Please! Bob, please! Oh, can't you see
Wouldn't it be loverly,
Loverly! P.C.C.!
Loverly! Free! Free! Free!

Narrator: Fortunately, in times of crises, Garff was always there to rally the groups, to lead them in festive song when spirits sank low. At Cal Club Convention the gaiety rose to such heights, that the purposes seemed confused. Who can forget that memorable year of 1957 at Santa Barbara when they gathered to sing to the President:

Chorus: (To the tune of "We Could Have Danced All Night")

We could have danced all night
We could have danced all night
But Garff was on the scene
We could have laughed all day
We could have laughed all day
But speeches intervened.
We only hoped this would be fun for us
Instead of talk and work a ton for us
We want to drink our beer,
We want to drink our beer,
We want to drink! Drank! Drunk our beer!

Narrator: And so --- 1958! Again, Convention time. The chapters travel to Berkeley for discussion and fellowship. Students came by every means. The southern delegations gather to sing this plea:

Chorus: (To the tune of "Get Me to the Church On Time")

We're leaving Berkeley in the morning,
Full of Unity and beer so fine
Cal was there to woo us,
They surely did pursue us,
But --- get us to the train on time!

Narrator: But before they leave, the Los Angeles chapter of California Club gathers before the President and Mrs. Sproul for one last song -- to bid affectionate farewell to THEIR FAIR BOB!

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Chorus: (To the tune of "I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face")

We've grown accustomed to your face
Because it hangs in Kerkhoff Hall,
We've grown accustomed to your laugh
It boomed across the quad,
Your voice, your walk
Your wife, your talk
These things we always will recall
The University has grown
You've given guidance, strength, and spirit
And your leadership was true.
Cal Club stand together, and it's all because of you,
We've grown accustomed to your laugh,
Accustomed to your voice,
Accustomed to BOB SPROUL!

FINIS

E. MY RECOLLECTIONS OF ROBERT FROST

In March, 1947, I found myself waiting for a train at the Southern Pacific depot in Berkeley. I was a young Assistant Professor in the Department of Speech, but, in addition, I had just joined the staff of the President of the University, Dr. Robert G. Sproul, as a "Special Assistant." In that capacity I had been assigned to meet the train -- and the University's special guest, the poet Robert Frost, who was to receive an honorary degree at the University's annual ceremony honoring the date of its chartering. I was apprehensive. How does one greet a famous man like Robert Frost? And why was an obscure person like myself chosen to do the honors? The answer to the latter question was simple. Frost evidently had been through some strenuous times. He was arriving in Berkeley a week early in order to rest up before the festivities of Charter Day. He did not want the press or the public or his friends to know that he was in town because, if they did know, he would get no rest. Thus, one obscure person -- myself -- was assigned to meet him and to be his escort during his week in hiding. No one would suspect that I was on an important assignment.

The train arrived. Only one passenger alighted -- a rumpled man in a grey overcoat with a shock of white hair blowing in the breeze. It could only be Robert Frost. I introduced myself. He shook hands in a friendly way, took hold of my arm, and together we walked to my car. The conversation flowed naturally and so easily that within five minutes I found myself saying: "I have been very nervous, Mr. Frost, wondering how I was to make conversation with a great man." "Great man, eh?" was the reply -- with a chuckle. Then, "It's not so hard, is it?" "Not if the great man is YOU," I said.

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That was the beginning of a friendship which lasted until Frost's death. I saw him on three subsequent visits. I know he reckoned me among his friends because I received a special invitation to attend his 80th birthday party in 1954. Alas, I didn't have the time or the money to travel to Amherst to attend. Another evidence of his friendship was the receipt of his annual Christmas greeting. Beginning in 1947, and lasting as long as Frost followed the custom, I received a copy of the original poem which he composed each year as a greeting to his friends. These poems were never printed anywhere else except on Frost's "Christmas card," and thus they constitute a rare and valuable bit of Frostiana.

During the week of Frost's visit in 1947, I was his escort and chauffeur. He was amazingly active for a man who had come to "rest". He stayed up at night as long as there was anyone to talk to; he was always up before eight, vigorous and bright. On the 1947 visit he stayed with the late Professor Willard Durham and Mrs. Durham. They had a spacious modern home in the Berkeley hills. Frost especially enjoyed the garden and the surrounding walks.

I don't recall all the things he did that week, but a couple of expeditions come to mind. On one occasion he asked to be driven around the city of San Francisco in the hope of recognizing some of the streets and buildings he had known as a boy. He had been born in San Francisco on March 26, 1874, and lived there until he was ten. Alas, nothing of Frost's old neighborhood was left. It had all been destroyed in the earthquake and fire of 1906. The new homes and buildings which replaced the old neighborhood meant nothing to the poet.

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On another occasion, Frost decided to pay a call on Gertrude Atherton, the grande dame of letters who, at the age of 90, was still a vigorous presence in San Francisco. She received the poet in a flowing pink creation -- a negligee? -- which almost matched her pinkish yellow hair. She was every inch the queen and the charmer. I don't remember what the poet and the novelist talked about, but as we left the house I recall that Frost made two remarks. One was: "She's remarkable, isn't she? Must have had the Steinoch operation." The other was: "She's a living link with the Founding Fathers. One of her ancestors, you know, was Benjamin Franklin."

On one of these expeditions to San Francisco, we stopped in one of the "sky rooms" for a drink -- and to enjoy the view. Frost wasn't much of a drinker, but he did love the panoramic vistas from these sky rooms. While we were there, a roving photographer came along and offered to take our picture. Bill Henders, a friend of mine, was with us and he and I readily agreed. It would be historic, we thought, to be photographed with America's great poet. The picture was taken -- I still have it -- and it is autographed by Frost. Below his name he has written the date, "March 26, 1947, San Francisco." The date was NOT March 26. It was about the 21st of the month. Frost's birthday was March 26, and we knew he was to be in Los Angeles on that day. When we asked why he had written March 26 on the photo he told us, with a twinkle in his eye, that it would provide some future biographer a small problem. It would be a matter of public record that he had spent his birthday, March 26, in Los Angeles, yet here would be an inscription in his own handwriting saying that he was in San Francisco that day.

Before the poet left the San Francisco area, a lavish pre-birthday dinner was given for him at the Mark Hopkins Hotel. The co-hosts were Robert G. Sproul, President of the University of California; Robinson Jeffers, the famous recluse poet of Carmel, California; and Louis Mertins, an old friend of Frost who was writing a book, *THE INTERVALS OF ROBERT FROST*, which was to be published by the University of California Press. About 100 guests were invited to the dinner and it was an elegant, gracious affair. The poet gave a delightful rambling, humorous response to all the toasts which had been drunk to him.

The name of Robinson Jeffers reminds me of one of the best conversations I had with Frost. I am an admirer of Jeffers' poetry. I asked Frost how he liked Jeffers' work. "Very much," said Frost, "He's a first rate poet." But then Frost went on to say that Jeffers was gloomy and completely pessimistic about the human race and the future of the world and that he, Frost, didn't share this view. "Take that poem of Jeffers called *SHINE, PERISHING REPUBLIC*. Of course the republic is perishing. So are you, so am I, so is everything. But the difference between Jeffers and myself is this: he puts all the emphasis on the perishing; I like to put a little of it on the shine." Can there be a simpler, truer statement of the difference between the two poets than that?

Frost received his honorary degree at the University's Charter Day Exercises on March 22, 1947, and departed the next day (as I recall) for Los Angeles. Before he left, I asked him to autograph my copy of his

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collected poems. He wrote as follows:

To Garff Wilson
from
Robert Frost
the following specially:

The play seems set for an almost infinite run
Don't mind a little thing like the actors fighting
The only thing I worry about is the sun
We'll be all right if nothing goes wrong with the lighting.

March 1947

I next saw the poet in December, 1953. On this visit, Frost stayed with Professor and Mrs. George Stewart. I volunteered once again to be his chauffeur and escort. Again we had many delightful conversations. I decided that I'd like to entertain him in some way and asked him what I could do for him which might be different and appealing. He replied something like this: "Do you know any athletes? I've always liked 'em. I see so many literary people and so many women, it would be nice for a change to see some athletic boys." Now it happens that I am a sports fan, that I have had many athletes in my classes, and that I had a couple of them living under my roof at the time. So I arranged a beer bust for a picked group of athletes and Robert Frost. It was held in the rumpus room of my home. It was a unique success. The boys sat around the room and on the floor, drinking beer, completely entranced by Frost's marvellous flow of stories, comments, and readings. I should not use the word "readings". Whenever Frost was asked to read one of his poems, he would reply, "I'll say you a poem." And "say" it he did -- from memory and from the heart.

One of the athletes at that first beer bust was Jackie Jensen. He had been an All-American football player and a baseball star at the University of

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California but had left college before his degree requirements were fulfilled in order to sign a lucrative contract as a professional baseball player. In 1953 he was a star with the Boston Red Sox but had returned to the University in the fall term (during the off season) to complete his degree requirements. Hence his presence in Berkeley. Jensen, the youthful baseball star, and Frost, the venerable poet, took an instant liking to each other. During the beer bust, Jensen sat at Frost's right hand and the two men developed an unusual rapport. Frost said he liked baseball. Jensen said he'd invite him to a game in Boston during the coming season. The date was fulfilled. I know, because the following spring I received a telegram from Frost which read something like this: "Jackie Jensen invited me to a baseball game, then lost himself. Please ask him to phone me at the Boston Arts Festival." At first the wire puzzled me. Surely, I thought, Frost is smart enough to know he can call the Red Sox organization or Fenway Park in Boston and thus get in touch with Jensen. Why take the trouble to wire me in California? After a moment of reflection it dawned on me that this was Frost's subtle way of including me in the arrangement and of telling me he remembered the beer bust where he met Jackie Jensen.

After the 1953 visit, Frost wrote once more in the flyleaf of my volume of his collected poems. This time he said, simply, "To Garff again in the confirmation of friendship...Robert...December 11, 1953, Berkeley, California."

After that memorable beer bust of 1953, I reviled myself for not getting a picture of the event. It was unique. It was something, I thought, which would never happen again. And there was no pictorial record of it!

But I was wrong. It did happen again -- on May 9, 1958.

The third memorable visit with Frost was a special occasion. Louis Mertins, his old friend, was giving the University his collection of Frostiana. Frost traveled to Berkeley to attend the ceremony of presentation and also to address what we call a University Meeting, that is, a convocation of students and faculty gathered to hear a notable speaker. On May 8, 1958, Frost spoke to a huge audience in our open air Greek Theatre. Once again he was a spellbinder. His talk was long and rambling -- and completely enthralling. He reminisced, he joked, he told stories, he gave advice, and he "said" many of his poems. The students would not let him stop. Each time he sat down, they rose, applauded, and kept cheering until he returned to the lectern and "said" another poem. This went on long after the hour for closing the meeting had come and gone. When finally Frost refused to "say" any more poems, the stage was deluged with students asking for autographs. Frost stayed on and on and on, giving autographs and shaking hands.

Even before the meeting Frost had recalled the bear bust of 1953 and had asked if we couldn't do the same thing again. Of course I leaped at the chance. So the day after the University Meeting, a new group of student athletes gathered in the rumpus room of my house and were captivated, again, by the magic of Robert Frost. This time I was prepared. I had a photographer to record the event and every student who was present has a copy of the photograph showing Frost surrounded by students listening to him with rapt attention. Among the athletes present on this occasion were Mike White, now the head football coach at this University; Jim Cherry, a football player who is now Development

Officer for Southwestern University; Dick Hathcock, another football player who is now a pilot for Western Air Lines; Bernie Simpson, now a successful basketball coach; and Robert Beloof who was a young faculty member in 1958 and is now a Professor of Rhetoric at this University and the author of several published volumes of poetry.

Once more Frost wrote a message in my volume of his poems right below the 1953 entry. The new entry read: "And again to the same faithful friend -- when he received the Mertins collection of me for the University. R.F. May 8, 1958."

My last visit with Robert Frost came in November, 1960, just before the Presidential election of that year. The poet had come to Berkeley to deliver a public lecture in the Berkeley High School-Community Auditorium. The amphitheatre was crowded with Frost's fans and he did not disappoint them. Again he captivated the audience with his mellow wit and wisdom. After the lecture, Professor George R. Stewart and Mrs. Stewart gave a small reception for him in their home. I was invited to attend. At one point, I took Frost aside and asked him if I could entertain him again. He said he'd love it IF his managers would give him a little free time. After a bit of negotiation, it was agreed that I could have him for lunch the next day. At 11:00 p.m. that night I went into action, found a private room in a nearby restaurant, telephoned a corps of my student friends, and at noon the next day a group of about fifteen athletes and other students gathered to have lunch with the poet. It was a lively, happy luncheon. Frost was at his

best. Because the Presidential election -- John F. Kennedy vs. Richard Nixon -- was very close, much of the talk turned to politics. The students tried to pry a political statement out of Frost. They asked him how he liked Kennedy. Frost replied, "He's a fine boy. I've know him for years." They asked him how he liked Nixon. Frost replied, "He's a very shrewd fellow. Lots of experience." There were many other questions, most of them attempts to get Frost to commit himself on how he was going to vote or on what party he belonged to. The old poet was wily and parried every thrust. Finally, however, they got him to make a confession which went something like this: "Well, er...er...you might say I've been an unhappy Democrat since 1896. That's the last time they had a really good candidate."

Before we parted that day, Frost wrote a fourth and final entry in my volume of his poetry. It reads:

To Garff

For the fourth time
 an assurance of affection and
 the pleasure he's given me with his boys

Robert

November 1960
 Berkeley, California (chance to write the
 great.....* in full

It was with genuine sadness that I said goodbye to Frost in 1960. Along with millions of other Americans, I saw him again on television when he "said" a poem at the inauguration of John F. Kennedy as President of the United States. I never met him again face to face.

Garff B. Wilson
 University of California
 Berkeley, CA 94720

*the word written here is not decipherable

Some former students who will recall meeting Robert Frost:

Mr. Michael White
Head Football Coach
Department of Intercollegiate Athletics
University of California, Berkeley CA 94720

Mr. Jack Jensen
Head Baseball Coach
Department of Intercollegiate Athletics
University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720

Mr. James B. Cherry
586 Winston Ave
San Marino, CA 91108

Mr. Richard B. Hathcock
628 So. Loretta Drive
Orange, CA 92669

Professor Robert Beloof
Department of Rhetoric
University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720

Mr. Robert L. Hamilton
3955 Franke Lane
Lafayette, CA 94549

Mr. William H. Henders
221 Carmel Ave
Piedmont, CA

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